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TICONDEROGA;

OR

THE BLACK EAGLE.

A Tale of Times Not Long Past.

BY G. P. R. JAMES, ESQ.,

AUTHOR OF

"THE GIPSY," "RICHELIEU," "THE FORGERY,"
"AGNES SOREL," "PEQUINILLO," "REVENGE,"
"VICISSITUDES OF A LIFE," ETC.

"What's the matter? Have we devils here? Do you put tricks upon us with savages, and men of Inde?"

The Tempest.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

THOMAS CAUTLEY NEWBY, PUBLISHER,

30, WELBECK STREET, CAVENDISH SQUARE.

1854.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

The first Chapters of this work were written in the month of May, in the year 1851.

at the University of Cambridge

TICONDEROGA ;

OR,

THE BLACK EAGLE.

CHAPTER I.

“ AMONG the minor trials of faith, few, perhaps, are more difficult to contend against than that growing conviction, which, commencing very soon after the holiday happiness of youth has been first tasted, becomes stronger every year, as experience unfolds to us the great, dark secrets of the world in which we are placed—

the conviction of the general worthlessness of our fellow men. A few splendid exceptions, a few bright and glorious spirits, a few noble and generous hearts, are not sufficient to cheer and to brighten the bleak prospect of the world's unworthiness; and we can only reconcile to our minds the fact that this vast multitude of base, depraved, tricky, insincere, ungrateful beings, are the pride of God's works, the express images of his person, by a recurrence to the great fundamental doctrine of man's fallen state, and utter debasement from his original high condition, and by a painful submission to the gloomy and fearful announcement, that '*strait is the gate and narrow is the way, and few there be that find it.*'

"If man's general unworthiness be a trial of our faith and of our patience, the most poignant anguish of the torture is perhaps the keen conviction of his ingratitude and his injustice—not alone the ingratitude and injustice of individuals, but those of every great body—

of every group—of so called friends, of governments, of countries, of people. Vainly do we follow the course of honor and uprightness ; vainly do we strive to benefit, to elevate, to ennoble our fellow men ; vainly do we labour to serve our party, or our cause, or our country. Neither honor, nor distinction, nor reward, follows our best efforts, even when successful, unless we possess the mean and contemptible adjuncts of personal interest, pushing impudence, crooked policy, vile subserviency, or the smile of fortune.

“ Here am I, who for many arduous years laboured with zeal, such as few have felt, at sacrifices such as few have made, and with industry such as few have exerted, to benefit my kind and my country. That I did so, and with success, was admitted by all ; even while others, starting in the career of life at the same time with myself, turned their course in the most opposite direction, pandered to vice, to folly, and even to crime, and trod a flowery

and an easy way, with few of the difficulties and impediments that beset my path.

“And what has been the result? Even success has brought to me neither reward, nor honor, nor gratitude. On those who have neither so labored, nor so striven, whose objects have been less worthy, whose efforts have been less great, recompenses and distinctions have fallen thick and fast—a Government’s patronage—a Sovereign’s favor—a people’s applause. And I am an exile on a distant shore ; unthought of, unrecompensed, unremembered.”

He paused with the pen in his hand, and the bitter and corroding thoughts of the neglect he had endured still busy in his mind, spreading into a thousand new channels, and poisoning all the sources of happiness within him. An old newspaper lay on the table. Newspapers were scarce in those days, and it had reached him tardily. Some accidental traveller through the wilderness had brought it

to him lately, and he had found therein fresh proofs of the forgetfulness of friends—fresh evidence of the truth of the old axiom, “out of sight out of mind.”

The perusal of this journal had given rise to the dark view of his own fate, and of human nature which he had just put upon record. His was not, in truth, a complaining spirit. It was not his nature to repine or to murmur. He had a heart to endure much, and to struggle on against obstacles : to take even bright and happy views : to rely upon friendship, and trust in God. It was only when some fresh burden was cast upon the load of ingratitude and falsehood he had met with, that a momentary burst of indignation broke from him—that the roused and irritated spirit spoke aloud. He had been a good friend, faithful, and true, and zealous. He had been a kind master, looking upon all around him as brethren, seeking their welfare and their happiness often more than his own. He had been a good

subject, honoring and loving his Sovereign, and obedient to the laws. He had been a good patriot, advocating by pen and voice (without fear, and without favor) all those measures which, from his very inmost heart, he believed were for his country's welfare, and grudging neither time, nor exertion, nor labor, nor money, to support that party which he knew to be actuated by the same principles as himself.

But, with all this, no one had ever sought to serve him. No one had ever thought of recompensing him. Many a friend had proved false, and neglected the best opportunity of promoting his interests: many, who had fed upon his bounty, or shared his purse, had back-bitten him in private, or maligned him in the public prints; and, though there were a few noble and generous exceptions, was it wonderful that there should be some bitterness in his heart, as he sat there in a lowly dwelling, in the midst of the woods of America,

striving to carve a fortune from the wilderness for himself and his two children !

Yet it was but for a moment that the gloom was suffered to remain—that the repining spirit held possession of him. Though his hair was very grey—rather with care than with age—body and mind were both active, and his heart was quite young. Sometimes he could hardly fancy himself anything but a boy : such was still his delight in the things which had delighted his early youth. Neither were trifles—matters of mere material comfort or discomfort—capable of annoying him in any shape. He trod upon all petty annoyances—trampled them beneath his feet. He had lived at ease, moved in refined society, enjoyed the conversation of the wise, the high, and the noble ; had servants to whom he said, “ Do this,” and they did it. But the absence of all these things in his present solitude affected him very little ; sometimes provoked a smile, yet rarely called forth a sigh. Not even solitude oppressed him ; though his

was that kind of solitude which is the most oppressive, the want of congenial minds and congenial spirits. Notwithstanding he had no near neighbours, the presence of man was not altogether wanting, though it was not of that kind which makes society for a mind like his. There was the shrewd, keen trader with the Indians, the rough, uncultivated pioneer of man's advance into the wilds, and an occasional wanderer like himself, seeking some place of settlement upon the very verge of civilization; but even this last kind of adventurer had none of those refinements which, at first sight, seemed to render the recluse, who recorded the foregoing reflections, as unfit for his position as man could be. Thus, there were scarcely any whose thoughts could be linked with *his* thoughts by associations either in the past or the present; none in habits or manners upon a par with himself; none who in cultivation of mind or general education could pretend to be his companion. The forest shut him and his little household in from all

the accessories which custom, intellect, and taste had rendered precious.

Still this privation had not affected him so much as might have been expected. He had resources in himself. He had some books, some musical instruments, and materials for drawing. He had his children too. It was only the decay of hopes, the frustration of bright aspirations, a bitter sense of the world's ingratitude, unmerited neglect, and the vanity of confidence, that ever clouded his heart as we have seen it clouded in the words he wrote. Those words were written in a record kept of each day's thoughts and actions, a record most useful to every man, in all circumstances ; but, above all, to the disappointed, and to the solitary. There, day by day, he can trace the progress he has made against fate and his own heart—how far he has enlisted spirits of thought upon his side against the desolating warfare of silent hours—how far he has triumphed over circumstances, and conquered repining. He

can detect, too, how often he has weakly yielded, how far he has fallen back before the enemy—what the ground gained, what the ground lost—and can strengthen himself to better endeavor.

Strong resolution is a mighty thing, and he who sat there had come with many a determination which remained unshaken, but yet to be fulfilled. Part of every resolution is a dream; for no man can ever say, “I will do thus or thus,” with certainty; and the things which frustrate purposes, and retard and deny fruition, are generally petty obstacles, and small impediments. The pebbles in our path weary us, and make us foot-sore, more than the rocks, which only require a bold effort to surmount. He trod firmly, and strongly, however, undiscouraged by all minor difficulties; and it was only the grievance and oppression of spirit that ever caused him to sit down in sadness, and pause in the struggle onward.

The house was a neat, though a lowly one.

It bore traces of newness ; for the bark on the trunks which supported the little veranda, had not yet mouldered away. Nevertheless, it was not built by his own hands ; for when he came there, he had much to learn in the rougher arts of life. But with a carpenter, from a village some nine miles off, he had aided to raise the building, and directed the construction by his own taste. The result was satisfactory to him ; and, what was more in his eyes, was satisfactory to the two whom he loved best—at least, so it seemed ; although those who knew them, even not so well as he did, might have doubted, and yet loved them all the better.

There is one sort of hypocrisy, and only one, which is loveable, which is noble ; and perhaps they practised it : certainly if they saw a defect in anything that had been done, they would not have admitted it even to their own hearts ; for their father had done it : if they ever felt a want, they never confessed it in their inmost

thoughts ; for their father had provided all that his means allowed.

Love—even earthly love—has a saving grace in it that keeps many a heart from destruction ; and if, when a fit of gloom or sadness came upon him, the father felt that it was wrong to repine at anything which Heaven's will inflicted, he felt it the more bitterly wrong when he remembered the blessing which two such children were, even under the most adverse fate. He laid down the pen, then, with a sigh ; and, in that sigh, self-reproach had a share, as well as sorrow.

Hardly was the ink dry upon the paper, when the sound of a horse's feet was heard without, beating with a slow and measured pace upon a part of the narrow road where the rock had been uncovered. It was a sound seldom heard in that little, lonely house ; and the master thereof hastily put by the book in which he had been writing, and asked himself, " What now ?"

CHAPTER II.

THE door of the house was open, and custom admitted every visitor freely, whatever was his errand. It was a strange state of society, in which men, though taught by daily experience that precaution was necessary, took none. They held themselves occasionally ready to repel open assault, which was rare, and neglected every safeguard against insidious attack, which was much more common. They were frank and free spirits in those olden times; and, though it be now the custom to sneer at the state of society, and the habits both of thought and action, in days long gone, methinks it might have been better, while we polished

away the coarseness of our ancestors, and remedied some of the evils of their early state, to have striven hard to retain their higher and finer qualities, their generous confidence, and that expansiveness of heart which the world so seldom sees in an age of mere material conveniences.

The door stood open, and it was the custom of the few who visited that secluded spot, to enter without ceremony, and to search in any or every room in the house for some one of the inhabitants. But, on this occasion, the horse that came up the road stopped at the gate of the little fence, and the traveller, when he reached the door, after dismounting, knocked with his whip before he entered.

The master of the house rose and went to the door. He was somewhat impatient of ceremony in a place where ceremony had long ceased; and his thoughts had not been of a tranquillising nature; but the aspect and demeanor of his visitor were not of a kind to

nourish any angry feeling. The latter was a young and very handsome man, probably not more than thirty years of age, sinewy, and well formed in person, with a noble and commanding countenance, a broad, lofty brow, and a keen, but tranquil eye. His manner was courteous, but grave; and he said, without waiting to have his errand asked—

“I know not, sir, whether I shall intrude upon you too far in asking hospitality for the night; but the sun is going down, and I was told by a lad whom I met in the woods just now, that there is no other house for ten miles farther, and, to say the truth, I am very ignorant of the way.”

“Come in,” said the master of the cottage; “we never refuse to receive a visitor here; and, indeed, have sometimes to accommodate more than the house will well hold. We are alone, however, now, and you will not have to put up with the inconveniences which our guests are

sometimes obliged to encounter. Stay, I will order your horse to be taken care of."

Thus saying, he advanced a step or two beyond the door, and called, in a loud voice, for some one whom he named Agrippa. He had to shout more than once, however, before a negro appeared, blind in one eye, and somewhat lame withal, but yet, apparently, both active and intelligent.

The necessary orders were soon given ; and, in a minute after, the traveller was seated with his host in the little parlor of the cottage. The manner of the latter could not be called cordial, though it was polite and courteous. It spoke a man acquainted with other scenes and other habits ; but not a lover of his race ; not a social or a genial spirit. The feelings, the thoughts, the memories, which had been busy in his brain, if not in his heart, before the arrival of the stranger, had thrown a coldness over his manner, which was only rendered not repulsive by the suavity of his words.

The other seemed to feel this in some degree ; and a certain stateliness appeared in his demeanor, which was not likely to warm his host into greater familiarity.

Suddenly, however, the chilly atmosphere of the room was warmed in a moment, and a chain of sympathy was established between the two, by the presence of youth. A boy of fifteen, and a girl a little more than a-year older, entered with gay and sunshiny looks, and the cloud was dispelled in a moment.

“ My daughter, Edith—my son, Walter,” said the master of the house, addressing the stranger, as the two young people bounded in ; and then he added, with a slight inclination of the head, “ It was an ancient and honorable custom in Scotland, when that country was almost as uncivilized as this, and possessed all the uncivilized virtues, never to enquire the name of a guest ; and therefore I cannot introduce you to my children ; but, doubtless, they

will soon acknowledge you as their nameless friend."

"I am a friend of one of them already," answered the stranger, holding out his hand to the lad. "This is the young gentleman who told me that I should find the only house within ten miles about this spot, and his father willing to receive me—though he did not say that I should find a gem in the wilderness, and a gentleman in these wild woods."

"It has been a foolish fancy, perhaps," said the master of the house, "to carry, almost into the midst of savage life, some remnants of civilization. We keep the portraits of dead friends—a lock of hair—a trinket—a garment of the loved and departed. The habits and the ornaments of another state of society are to me like those dead friends; and I love to have some of their relics near me."

"Oh, my dear father," said Edith, seating herself by him, and leaning her head upon his

bosom, without timidity or restraint, "you could never do without them. I remember when we were coming hither, now three years ago, that you talked a great deal of the joys of free, unshackled, natural existence ; but I knew quite well, even then, that you would not be content till you had subdued the rough things around you to a more refined state."

"What made you think so, Edith?" asked her father, looking down at her with a smile.

"Because you never could bear the parson of the parish drinking punch and smoking tobacco-pipes," answered the beautiful girl, with a laugh ; "and I was quite sure that it was not more savage life you sought, but greater refinement."

"Oh, yes, my father," added the lad, "and you often said, when we were in England, that the red Indian, had much more of the real gentleman in him than many a peer."

"Dreams, dreams!" ejaculated their father,

with a melancholy smile ; and then, turning to the stranger, he added, “you see, sir, how keenly our weaknesses are read even by children. But come, Edith, our friend must be hungry with his long ride ; see and hasten the supper. Our habits are primeval here, sir, like our woods. We follow the sun to bed, and wake him in the morning.”

“They are good habits,” observed the stranger, “and such as I am accustomed to follow myself. But do not, I pray you, hasten your supper for me. I am anything but a slave of times and seasons. I can fast long and fare scantily, without inconvenience.”

“And yet you are an Englishman,” remarked the master of the house, gravely ; “a soldier, or I mistake ; a man of rank and station, I am sure ; though all three would generally imply, as the world goes at this present time, a fondness for luxurious ease, and an indulgence of all the appetites.”

A slight flush came into his companion's cheek ; and the other hastened to add,

“ Believe me, I meant nothing discourteous. I spoke of the Englishman, the soldier, and the man of rank and station, generally—not of yourself. I see it is far otherwise with you.”

“ You hit hard, my good friend,” rejoined the stranger, “ and there is some truth in what you say. But, perhaps, I have seen as many lands as you ; and I boldly venture to pronounce that the fault is in the age, not in the nation, the profession, or the class. We will try to amend it. That is the best course ; and, though individual effort can but do little, each separate man may improve several others, and thus onward to better things and better days.”

As he spoke, he rose, walked thoughtfully to the window, and gazed out for a moment or two in silence ; and then, turning round, he said, addressing his host's son—

“ How beautifully the setting sun shines down yonder glade in the forest, pouring, as it

were, in a golden mist through the needle foliage of the pines ! Runs there a road down there ?”

The boy answered in the affirmative ; and, drawing close to the stranger’s side, pointed out to him by the undulations of the ground, and the gaps in the tree tops, the wavy line that the road followed, down the side of the gentle hill on which the house stood, and up the opposite ascent. His description was peculiarly clear and accurate. He seemed to have marked every tree and stone and brook along the path ; and where a bye-way diverged, or where the road divided into two, he noted the marking object, saying—

“By a white oak and a great hemlock tree, there is a foot-path to the left : at a clump of large cedars on the edge of the swamp the road forks out to the right and left, one branch leading eastward towards the river, and one out westward to the hunting-grounds.”

The stranger seemed to listen to him with

pleasure, often turning his eyes to the lad's face as he spoke, rather than to the landscape to which he pointed ; and when he had done, he laid his hand on his shoulder, saying—

“ I wish I had such a guide as you, Walter, for my onward journey.”

“ Will it be far ?” asked the youth.

“ Good faith, I cannot well tell,” answered the other. “ It may be as far as Montreal, or even to Quebec, if I get not satisfaction soon.”

“ I could not guide you as far as that,” replied the boy ; “ but I know every step towards the lakes, as well as an Indian.”

“ With whom he is very fond of consorting,” said his father, with a smile.

But before the conversation could proceed, an elderly, respectable woman-servant entered the room, and announced that supper was on the table. Edith had not returned, but they found her in a large, oblong chamber, to which the master of the house led the way. There was a long table in the midst, and four

wooden chairs arranged round one end, over which a snowy table-cloth was spread. The rest of the table was bare. But a number of other seats, and two or three benches, were in the room, while at equal distances on either side, touching the walls, lay several bear-skins and buffalo-skins, as if spread out for beds.

The eye of the stranger glanced over them as he entered; but his host replied to his thoughts with a smile, saying—

“We will lodge you somewhat better than that, sir. We have just now more than one room vacant; but you must know there is no such thing as privacy in this land, and when we have a visit from our Indian friends, those skins make them supremely happy. I often smile to think how a red man would feel in Holland sheets. I tried it once, but it did not succeed. He pulled the blankets off the bed, and slept upon the floor.”

When the companions were seated at table, the conversation turned to many subjects,

general of course ; yet personally interesting to both the elder members of the party ; at least, so it seemed from the eagerness with which they discussed them. The state of the Colonies was spoken of ; the state of England ; the relation of the two to each other ; and the dangers which were then apprehended from the encroaching spirit of the French, who were pushing forward posts, on every point of their frontier, into territories undoubtedly British. No mention was ever made of even the probability of the separation of England from her North American Colonies ; for at that time the idea had never entered into the imagination of any, except some of those quiet students of the past, who sometimes derive, from the very dissimilar history of former days, a foresight regarding the future, which partakes of, without being wholly, intuition, and whose warnings, like Cassandra's, are always scoffed at till the time for remedial action is passed. The danger to the British possessions in North America

seemed, to the eyes of almost all men, to lie in the power, the eager activity, and the grasping spirit of France; and the little cloud of dissatisfaction, no bigger than a man's hand, which hung upon the horizon of British interests in the transatlantic world, was little supposed to forebode the storm and the earthquake which should rend the colonies from the mother country. Alas, for man's calculations, and for his foresight! How rarely, how very rarely, do they penetrate below the surface of the present or the future!

Both the host and his guest had travelled far, and had seen much. Both also had thought much; but experience was, of course, on the side of the elder. The other, however, had one advantage; he had seen the European countries of which they spoke, at a much later period than his companion; and many great changes had taken place, of which the latter had no personal knowledge. Thus, they viewed the state of society in the old world from diffe-

rent points, and, of course, held different opinions, especially regarding France. Nevertheless, the views of him who had not been in that land for many years, were upon the whole more accurate than those of the other. He was a man of singular acuteness of perception, who judged less from broad and glittering surfaces, than from small but fundamental facts; while the other, a man of action and quick intelligence, though clear and accurate in his perception of all with which he had immediately to do, judged it a waste of time to carry his thoughts far into the future, over which he could have no control. Somewhat dazzled by the military display, and apparently well cemented power of government, which he had beheld in France, just before he quitted Europe, he entertained great apprehensions regarding her progress in America, and expressed them.

“I entertain but little fear,” replied the other, “and will never remove a steer from my stall, till I see the French at my door. They may

advance for some short distance, and for some short time, but they will be forced to recoil."

"God grant it!" ejaculated the guest; "but more energetic measures must be taken to repel them, than have been hitherto employed. The French force at this time in Canada, I am assured, outnumbers, by many thousands, the whole disposable forces of our colonies. They are of a different material, too, from our armies, and officered by very different men. The Frenchman accommodates himself better to circumstances than the Englishman; is as brave, though less persevering; is more agile, though less vigorous. The French troops here, too, are accustomed to the march through the forest, and the skirmish in the wood; and their officers know far better than ours how to carry on their operations with, or against, the Indians. We are too rigid in our notions of discipline, too pedantic in our system of tactics. In one set of circumstances, we follow the rules that are only applicable to another; and in planning

our operations, though we may consider the local features of the country, and the force opposed to us, we refuse to take into calculation the character and habits of our enemy. We may be victorious in the end, and I trust in God that we shall ; but depend upon it, my good sir, we require, and shall have, probably more than one good drubbing, before we learn our lesson completely. Now, we cannot afford many drubbings, for our small island cannot afford many men. Already, to contend with the enemies we have in Europe, we have to subsidize fifty thousand foreigners, a practice much to be deprecated, and which I should be sorry to see introduced here ; for though, by blood, not wholly English, I know that the intrinsic value of the British Soldier is superior to that of any other on the face of the earth. We cannot, however, supply this country with re-inforcements to meet many checks ; while France, from her much larger population, can

pour a continuous stream of troops into her colonies.”

“Not for long,” answered his host. “The fabric of her power is undermined at the foundation. The base is rotten; and the building, though imposing without, is crumbling to decay. It is well, however, to see as you do the utmost extent of a danger—perhaps, even to over-estimate it, in order to meet it the more vigorously. Depend upon it, however, the present state of things in France is not destined for long duration. I judge not by the feebleness she has shown of late years in many most important efforts. Beset as she is by enemies, and enemies close at her gates, distant endeavors may well be paralyzed without there being any real diminution of her power. But I judge from what I myself saw in that country, a good many years ago. The people—the energetic, active, though volatile people, in whom lies her real strength—were every where oppressed and suffering. Misery might

drive them into her armies, and give them the courage of despair ; but, at the same time, it severed all ties between them and those above them—substituted contempt and hatred for love and reverence, in the case of the nobility, and fear, doubt, and an inclination to resist, for affection, confidence, and obedience, towards the throne. Corruption, spreading through every class of society, could only appear more disgusting when clad in the robes of royalty, or tricked out in the frippery of aristocracy ; and nations speedily learn to resist powers which they have ceased to respect. A state of society cannot long endure, in which, on the one side, boundless luxury, gross depravity, and empty frivolity, in a comparatively small body, and grinding want, fierce passions, and eager, unsated desires, on the other side, are brought into close contiguity, without one moral principle, or one religious light—where there is nothing but the darkness of superstition, or the deeper darkness of infidelity.

Ere many years have passed, the crown of France will have need of all her troops at home."

The stranger mused much upon his companion's words, and seemed to feel that they were prophetic. The same, or very nearly the same, were written by another; but they were not given to the world for several years after, on the eve of the great catastrophe; and in the year one thousand seven hundred and fifty-seven, few seemed to dream that the power of France could ever be shaken, except by an external enemy. Men ate, and drank, and danced, and sang, in the Parisian capital, as gaily as they did in the palace of Sardanapalus, with as great a fall at hand.

The conversation then assumed a lighter tone. Each asked the other of his travels, and commented on many objects of interest which both had seen on the broad high-ways of the world. Both were men of thought, according to their several characters—both men of taste

and refinement ; and the two young people, who had sat silent, listening to their graver discourse, now joined in, from time to time, with happy freedom, and unchecked ease. Their father's presence was no restraint upon them ; for, in all that they had known of life, he had been their companion and their friend—the one to whom their hearts had been ever opened—the one chiefly revered from love. The stranger, too, though he was grave, was, in no degree, stern, and there was something winning even in his very gravity. He listened, too, when they spoke—heard the brief comment—answered the eager question ; and a kindly smile would, ever and anon, pass over his lip, at the strange mixture of refinement and simplicity which he found in those two young beings, who passed many a month of every year without seeing any one, except the wild Indians of the friendly tribes surrounding them, or an occasional trader wending his way, with his wares, up the stream of the Mohawk.

More than an hour was beguiled at the table—a longer period than ordinary—and then the bright purple hues, which spread over the eastern wall of the room, opposite to the windows, told that the autumnal sun had reached the horizon. The master of the house rose to lead the way into the other room again; but, ere he moved from the table, an additional figure was added to the group around it, though the foot was so noiseless that no one heard its first entrance into the chamber.

The person, who had joined the little party, was a man of the middle age, of a tall, commanding figure, upright and dignified carriage, and fine, but somewhat strongly-marked, features. The expression of his countenance was grave and noble; but there was a certain strangeness in it—a touch of wildness, perhaps I might call it—very difficult to define.

It was not in the eyes; for they were good, calm, and steadfast, gazing straight at any object of contemplation, and fixed full upon

the face of any one he addressed. It was not in the lips; for, except when speaking, they were firm and motionless. Perhaps it was in the eye-brow, which, thick and strongly marked, was, every now and then, suddenly raised or depressed, without any apparent cause.

His dress was very strange. He was evidently of European blood, although his skin was embrowned by much exposure to sun and weather. Yet he wore not altogether either the European costume, the garb of the American back-woodsman, or that of the Indian. There was a mixture of all, which gave him a wild and fantastic appearance. His coat was evidently English, and had stripes of gold lace upon the shoulders; his knee-breeches and high riding-boots would have looked English also, had not the latter been destitute of soles, properly so called; for they were made somewhat like a stocking, and the part beneath the foot was of the same leather as the rest. Over his shoulder

was a belt of rattle-snake skin, and round his waist a sort of girdle, formed from the claws of the bear, from which depended a string of wampum, while two or three knives and a small tomahawk appeared on either side. No other weapon had he whatever. But under his left arm hung a common powder-flask, made of cow's horn, and, beside it, a sort of wallet, such as the trappers commonly used for carrying their little store of Indian corn. A round fur cap, of bear-skin, without any ornament whatever, completed his habiliments.

It would seem that in that house he was well known ; for its master instantly held forth his hand to him, and the young people sprang forward and greeted him warmly. A full minute elapsed before he spoke ; but nobody uttered a word till he did so, all seeming to understand his habits.

“ Well, Mr. Prevost,” he said, at length, “ I have been a stranger to your wigwam for some time. How art thou, Walter ? Not a

man yet, in spite of all thou canst do. Edith, my sweet lady, time deals differently with thee from thy brother. He makes thee a woman against thy will." Then, turning suddenly to the stranger, he said, "Sir, I am glad to see you; were you ever at Kielmansegge?"

"Once," replied the stranger, laconically.

"Then we will confer presently," observed the new comer. "How have you been this many a day, Mr. Prevost? You must give me food; for I have ridden far—I will have that bear-skin, too, for my night's lodging place, if it be not pre-engaged. No, not that one; the next. I have told Agrippa to see to my horse; for I ever count upon your courtesy."

There was something extremely stately and dignified in his whole tone, and, with frank straightforwardness, but without any indecorous haste, he seated himself at the table, drew towards him a large dish of cold meat, and, while Edith and her brother hastened to supply him with everything else he needed, pro-

ceeded to help himself, liberally, to whatever was within his reach. Not a word more did he speak for several minutes, while Mr. Prevost and his guest stood looking on in silence, and the two young people attended the new comer at the table.

As soon as he had done, he rose abruptly, and then, looking first to Mr. Prevost, and next to the stranger, said—

“Now, gentlemen, if you please, we will to council.”

The stranger hesitated; and Mr. Prevost answered, with a smile—

“I am not of the initiated, Sir William, so I and the children will leave you with my guest, whom you seem to know; but of whose name and station I am ignorant.”

“Stay, stay,” interposed the other, to whom he spoke, “we shall need not only your advice but your concurrence. This gentleman my, Lord, I will answer for, as a faithful and loyal subject of his Majesty King George. He has

been treated with that hardest of all hard treatment—neglect. But his is a spirit in which not even neglect can drown out loyalty to his King, and love to his country. Moreover, I may say, that the neglect which he has met with has proceeded from a deficiency in his own nature. God, unfortunately, did not make him a grumbler, or he would have been a peer long ago. The Almighty endowed him with all the qualities that could benefit his fellow creatures, but denied him those which were necessary to advance himself. Others have wondered that he never met with honors, or distinction, or reward. I wonder not at all; for he is neither a charlatan, nor a coxcomb, nor a pertinacious beggar. He cannot stoop to slabber the hand of power, nor lick the spittle of the man in office. How can such a man have advancement? It is contrary to the course of the things of this world. But as he has loved his fellow men, so will he love them. As he has served his country, so will he serve

it. As he has sought honor and truth more than promotion, honor and truth will be his reward. Alas, that it should be the only one ! But when he dies, if he dies unrecompensed, it will not be unregretted or unvenerated. He must be of our council."

Mr. Prevost had stood by in silence, with his eyes bent upon the ground, and, perhaps, some self-reproach at his heart for the bitter words that he had written only a few hours before. But Edith sprang forward, and caught Sir William Johnson's hand, as he ended the praises of her father ; and, bending her head with exquisite grace, pressed her lips upon it. Her brother seemed inclined to linger for a moment ; but saying, " Come Walter," she glided out of the room, and the young lad, following, closed the door behind him.

CHAPTER III.

“ Who can he be ? ” said Walter Prevost, when they had reached the little sitting-room. “ Sir William called him ‘ my lord. ’ ”

Edith smiled at her brother’s curiosity. Oh, how much older women always are, than men !

“ Lords are small things here, Walter,” she said, gazing forth from the window at the stately old trees within sight of the house, which for her, as for all expanding minds, had their homily. Age — hackneyed age — reads few lessons. It ponders those long received, subtilizes, refines, combines. Youth has a

lesson in every external thing ; but, alas ! soon forgets the greater part of all.

“ I do not think that lords are small things anywhere,” answered her brother, who had not imbibed any of the republican spirit which was even then silently creeping over the American people. “ Lords are made by kings for great deeds, or great virtues.”

“ Then they are lords of their own making,” retorted Edith ; “ kings only seal the patent Nature has bestowed. That great red oak, Walter, was growing before the family of any man now living was ennobled by the hand of royalty.”

“ Pooh, nonsense, Edith !” ejaculated her brother ; “ you are indulging in one of your day dreams. What has that oak to do with nobility ?”

“ I hardly know,” replied his sister ; “ yet something linked them together in my mind. It seemed as if the oak asked me, ‘ what is *their* antiquity to *mine* ?’ and yet the antiquity

of their families is their greatest claim to our reverence."

"No, no!" cried Walter Prevost, eagerly; "their antiquity is nothing; for we are all of as ancient a family as they are. But it is that they can show a line from generation to generation, displaying some high qualities, ennobled by some great acts. Granted that here or there a sluggard, a coward, or a fool, may have intervened, or that the acts which have won praise in other days may not be revered now; yet I have often heard my father say, that, in looking back through records of noble houses, we shall find a sum of deeds and qualities suited to, and honoured by, succeeding ages, which, tried by the standard of the times of the men, shews that hereditary nobility is not merely an honor won by a worthy father for unworthy children, but a bond to great endeavors, signed by a noble ancestor, on behalf of all his descendants. Edith, you are not saying what you think."

“ Perhaps not,” answered Edith, with a quiet smile ; “ but, let us have some lights, Walter ; for I am well nigh in darkness.”

They were not ordinary children. I do not intend to represent them as such. But he who says that what is not ordinary is not natural, may, probably, be an ass. How they had become what they were, is another question ; but that is easily explained. First—Nature had not made them of her common clay ; for, notwithstanding all bold assertions of that great and fatal falsehood, that all men are born equal, such is not the case. No two men are ever born equal. No two leaves are alike upon a tree, and there is a still greater dissimilarity — a still greater inequality—between the gifts and endowments of different men. God makes them unequal. God raises the one, and depresses the other, ay, from the very birth, in the scale of his creation ; and man, by one mode or another, in every state of society, and in every land, recognises the

difference, and assigns the rank. Nature, then, had not made those two young people of her common clay. Their father was no common man: their mother had been one in whom mind and heart, thought and feeling, had been so nicely balanced, that emotion always found a guide in judgment. But this was not all. The one child up to the age of thirteen, the other until twelve, had been trained and instructed with the utmost care. Every advantage of education had been lavished upon them; and every natural talent they possessed had been developed, cultivated, directed. They had been taught from mere childhood to think, as well as to know; to use, as well as to receive, information. Then had come a break—the sad, jarring break in the sweet chain of the golden hours of youth—a mother's death. Till then their father had borne much from the world and from society unflinching. But then his stay and his support were gone. Visions became realities for him. What wonder if, when the

light of his home had gone out, his mental sight became somewhat dim, the objects around him indistinct? He gathered together all he had, and migrated to a distant land, where small means might be considered great, and where long nourished theories of life might be tried by the test of experience.

To his children, the change was but a new phase of education—one not often tried, but not without its uses. If their new house was not completely a solitude, it was very nearly so. Morally and physically they were thrown nearly upon their own resources. But previous training had made those resources many. Mentally, at least, they brought a great capital into the wilderness, and they found means to employ it. Everything around them, in its newness and its freshness, had a lesson and a moral. The trees, the flowers, the streams, the birds, the insects, the new efforts, the new labors, the very wants and deficiencies of their present state—all taught them something. Had

they been born amidst such things : had they been brought up in such habits : had their previous training been at all of the same kind ; or even had the change been as great as it might have been : had they been left totally destitute of comforts, conveniences, attendance, books, companionships, objects of art and taste, to live the life of the savage,—the result might have been—must have been—very different. But there was enough left of the past to link it beneficially to the present. They brought all the materials with them from their old world for opening out the rich mines of the new. It is not to be wondered at, then, if they were no ordinary children ; and if, at fifteen and sixteen, they reasoned and thought of things, and in modes, not often dealt with by the young. I say, not often ; because, even under other circumstances, and with no such apparent causes, we see occasional instances of beings like themselves.

They were, then, no ordinary children, but yet quite natural.

The influences which surrounded them had acted differently, of course, on the boy and on the girl. He had learned to act as well as think: she to meditate as well as act. He had acquired the strength, the foot, the ear, the eye, of the Indian. She too had gained much in activity and hardihood; but in the dim glades, and on the flower-covered banks, by the side of the rushing stream, or hanging over the roaring cataract, she had learned to give way to long and silent reveries, dealing both with the things of her own heart and the things of the wide world; comparing the present with the past, the solitude with society, meditating upon life and its many phases, and yielding herself, while the silent majesty of the scene seemed to sink into her soul, to what her brother was wont to call her "day dreams."

I have said that she dealt with the *things of her own heart*. Let me not be misunderstood: the things of that heart were very simple. They had never been complicated with even a thought of love. Her own fate, her own history, her soul in its relation to God and to His creation, the sweet and bright emotions produced within her by all things beautiful in art or nature, the thrill excited by a lovely scene or a dulcet melody, the trance-like pleasure of watching the clear stream waving the many-colored pebbles of its bed, these, and such as these, were the things of the heart I spoke of; and on them she would dwell and ponder, asking herself what they were, whence they came, how they arose, whither they tended. It was the music, the poetry, of her own nature, in all its strains, which she sought to search into; but the sweetest, though sometimes the saddest, of the harmonies in woman's heart was yet wanting.

She had read of love, it is true; she had

heard it spoken of, but, with a timidity not rare in the most sensitive minds, she had excluded it even from her day-dreams. She knew that there was such a thing as passion: she might be conscious that it was latent in her own nature, but she tried not to seek it out. To her it was an abstraction. Psyche had not held the lamp to Eros.

So much it was needful to say of the two young Prevosts before we went onward with our tale; and now, as far as they were concerned, the events of that day were near their close. Lights were brought, and Walter and his sister sat down to muse over books—I can hardly say read—till their father re-appeared; for the evening prayer and the parting kiss had never been omitted in their solitude ere they lay down to rest.

The conference in the hall, however, was long, and more than an hour elapsed before the three gentlemen entered the room. Then a few minutes were passed in quiet conversa-

tion, and then, all standing round the table, Mr. Prevost raised his voice, saying,

“Protect us, oh Father Almighty, in the hours of darkness and unconsciousness. Give us thy blessing of sleep, to refresh our minds and bodies ; and, if it be Thy will, let us wake again to serve and praise Thee through another day more perfectly than in the days past, for Christ’s sake.”

The Lord’s prayer succeeded ; and then they separated to their rest.

CHAPTER IV.

BEFORE daylight in the morning, Sir William Johnson was on foot, and in the stable. Some three or four negro-slaves—for there were slaves then on all parts of the American continent—lay sleeping soundly in a small sort of barrack hard by ; and, as soon as one of them could be roused, Sir William's horse was saddled, and he rode away, without pausing to eat, or to say farewell. He bent his course direct towards the Mohawk, flowing at some twenty miles' distance from the cottage of Mr. Prevost.

Before Sir William had been five minutes in the saddle, he was in the midst of the deep

woods which surrounded the little, well-cultivated spot where the English wanderer had settled. It was a wild and rather gloomy scene into which he plunged ; for, though something like a regular road had been cut, along which carts as well as horses could travel, yet that road was narrow, and the branches nearly met overhead.

In some places, the underwood, nourished by a moist and marshy soil, was too thick and tangled to be penetrated either by foot or eye. In others, where the path ascended to higher grounds, or passed amongst the hard, dry rocks, the aspect of the forest changed. Pine after pine, with now and then an oak, a chesnut, or a locust-tree, covered the face of the country, with hardly a shrub upon the ground below, which was carpeted with the brown, slippery needles of the resinous trees ; and between the huge trunks poured the grey, mysterious light of the early dawn, while a thin, whitish vapor hung amongst the boughs overhead.

About a mile from the house, a bright and beautiful stream crossed the road, flowing on towards the greater river ; but bridge there was none ; and, in the middle of the stream, Sir William suffered his horse to stop, and bend its head to drink. He gazed to the westward ; but all there was dark and gloomy under the thick, overhanging branches. He turned his eyes to the eastward, where the ground was more open, and the stream could be seen flowing on for nearly half a mile, with little cascades, and dancing rapids, and calm lapses of bright, glistening water, tinted with a rosy hue, where the morning sky gleamed down upon it through some break in the forest canopy.

While thus gazing, his eye rested on a figure standing in the midst of the stream, with rod in hand, and the back turned towards him. He thought he saw another figure, also, amongst the trees upon the bank ; but it was shadowy there, and the form seemed shadowy too.

After gazing for a minute or so, he raised his voice, and exclaimed—

“Walter !—Walter Prevost !”

The lad heard him ; and, laying his rod upon the bank, hastened along over the green turf to join him ; at the same moment, the figure amongst the trees—if really figure it was—disappeared from the sight.

“Thou art out early, Walter,” said Sir William. “What do you at this hour?”

“I am catching trout for the stranger’s breakfast,” replied the lad, with a gay laugh. “You should have had your share, had you but waited.”

“Who was that speaking to you on the bank, above?” asked the other, gravely.

“Merely an Indian girl, watching me fishing,” responded Walter Prevost.

“I hope your talk was discreet,” rejoined Sir William. “These are dangerous times, when trifles are of import, Walter.”

“There was no indiscretion,” returned the

lad, with the color mounting slightly in his cheek. "She was remarking the feather-flies with which I caught the trout, and blamed me for using them. She said it was a shame to catch anything with false pretences."

"She is wise," observed the other, with a faint smile; "yet, that is hardly the wisdom of her people. An Indian maiden!" he added, thoughtfully. "Of what tribe is she? One of the Five Nations, I trust?"

"Oh, yes—an Oneida," replied Walter; "one of the daughters of the Stone; the child of a Sachem, who often lodges at our house."

"Well, be she whom she may," rejoined Sir William, "be careful of your speech, Walter, especially regarding your father's guest. I say not, to conceal that there is a stranger with you, for that cannot be; but, whatever you see or guess of his station, or his errand, keep it to yourself, and let not a woman be the

sharer of your thoughts, till you have tried her with many a trial."

"She would not betray them, I am sure," said the lad warmly; and then added, with slight embarrassment, as if he felt that he had in a degree betrayed himself, "but she has nothing to reveal, or to conceal. Our talk was all of the river, and the fish. We met by accident, and she is gone."

"Perhaps you may meet again by accident," suggested the other, "and then be careful. But now, to more serious things. Perchance your father may have to send you to Albany—perchance, to my castle. You can find your way speedily to either. Is it not so?"

"Farther than either," replied the lad, gaily.

"But you may have a heavy burden to carry," rejoined Sir William; "do you think you can bear it?—I mean the burden of a secret."

“ I will not drop it by the way,” returned Walter, gravely.

“ Not if the Sachem’s daughter offers to divide the load ?” asked his companion.

“ Doubt me not,” replied Walter.

“ I do not doubt you,” said Sir William, “ I do not. But I would have you warned. And now farewell. You are very young to meet maidens in the wood. Be careful. Farewell.”

He rode on; and the boy tarried by the wayside, and meditated. His were very strange thoughts, and stranger feelings. They were the feelings that only come to any person once in a life-time—earlier with some, later with others—the ecstatic thrill, the joyous emotion, the dancing of the young, bright waters of early life, in the pure morning sunshine of first love : the dream : the vision : the trance of indefinite joy : the never-to-be-forgotten, the never-to-be-renewed, first glance at the

world of passion that is within us. Till that moment, he had been as one climbing a mountain with thick boughs shading from his eyes the things before him ; but his friend's words had been a hand drawing back the branches on the summit, and shewing him a wondrous and lovely sight beyond.

Was he not very young to learn such things? O, yes, he was very, very young ; but it was natural that in that land he should learn them young. All was young there : all is young : every thing is rapid and precocious ; the boy has the feelings of the young man ; the young man the thoughts of maturity. The air, the climate, the atmosphere, of the land and the people, all have their influence. The shrubs grow up in an hour : the flowers succeed each other with hasty profusion, and even the alien and the stranger-born feel the infection, and join unresistingly in the rapid race. Well did the dreamers of the middle ages place the fountain of youth on the shores of the new world.

The boy, who stood there meditating, had lived half a life time in the few short years he had spent upon that soil ; and now, at Sir William's words, as with him of old, the scales fell from his eyes, and he saw into his own heart.

His reverie lasted not long, indeed ; but it was long enough. In about two minutes, he took his way up the stream again, still musing, towards the place where he had laid down his rod upon the bank. He heeded not much where he set his feet. Sometimes, it was on the dry ground, by the side of the stream ; sometimes, it was in the gurgling waters, and amongst the glossy pebbles.

He paused, at length, where he had stood fishing a few minutes before, and looked up to the bank covered with green branches. He could see nothing there in the dim obscurity ; but even the murmur of the waters, and the sighing of the wind, did not prevent him from hearing a sound—a gentle stirring of the boughs. He sprang up the bank, and in amongst the

maples ; and, about ten minutes after, the sun, rising higher, poured its light through the stems upon a boy and girl, seated at the foot of an old tree : he, with his arms around her, and his hand resting on the soft, brown, velvety skin, and she, with her head upon his bosom, and her warm lips within the reach of his. What, though a sparkling drop or two gemmed her sunny cheek, they were but the dew of the sweetest emotion that ever refreshes the summer morning of our youth.

Her skin was brown, I have said—yes, very brown—but still hardly browner than his own. Her eyes were dark and bright, of the true Indian hue, but larger and more open than is at all common in any of the tribes of Iroquois. Her lips, too, were as rosy and as pure of all tinge of brown, as those of any child of Europe ; and her fingers, also, were stained of Aurora's own hue. But her long, silky, black hair would have spoken her race at once, had not each tress terminated in a wavy curl. The

lines of the form and of the face were all wonderfully lovely, too ; and yet were hardly those which characterize so peculiarly the Indian nations. The nose was straighter, the cheek-bones less prominent, the head more beautifully set upon the shoulders. The expression, also, as she rested there, with her cheek leaning on his breast, was not that of the usual Indian countenance. It was softer, more tender, more impassioned ; for, though romance and poetry have done all they could to spiritualise the character of Indian love, I fear, from what I have seen, and heard, and known, it is rarely what it has been portrayed. Her face, however, was full of love, and tenderness, and emotion ; and the picture of the two, as they sat there, told, at once, the tale of love just spoken to a willing ear.

There let us leave them. It was a short hour of joy ; a sweet dream, in the dark, stormy night of life. They were happy, with the unalloyed happiness so seldom known even for

an hour, without fear, or doubt, or guilt, or remorse ; and so let them be. What matters it if a snake should glide through the grass hard by ? It may pass on, and not sting them. What matters it if a cloud should hang over the distant horizon ? The wind may waft away the storm. Forethought is a curse or a blessing, as we use it. To guard against evils that we see, is wise ; to look forth for those we cannot guard against, is folly.

CHAPTER V.

THE hour of breakfast had arrived, when Walter Prevost returned with his river spoil ; but the party at the house had not yet sat down to table. The guest who had arrived on the preceding night was standing at the door, talking with Edith, while Mr. Prevost himself was within, in conference with some of the slaves. Shaded by the little rustic porch, Edith was leaning against the door-post in an attitude of exquisite grace ; and the stranger, with his arms crossed upon his broad, manly chest, now raising his eyes to her face, now dropping them to the ground, seemed to watch with interest

the effect his words produced, as it was written on that beautiful countenance. I have said with interest, rather than with admiration; for although it is hardly possible to suppose that the latter had no share in his sensations, yet it seemed, as far as outward manner could indicate inward thought, that he was reading a lesson from her looks, instead of gazing upon a beautiful picture. The glance, too, was so calm, and so soon withdrawn, that there could be nothing offensive in it—nothing that could even say to herself, “I am studying you,” although a looker-on might so divine.

His words were gay and light, indeed, and his whole manner very different from the day before. A cloud seemed to have passed away—a cloud rather of reflection than of care; and Walter, as he came up, and heard his cheerful tones, wondered at the change; for he knew not how speedily men accustomed to action and decision, cast from them the burden of weighty

thought, when the necessity for thought is past.

“I know not,” said the stranger, speaking as the young man approached, “I know not how I should endure it myself for any length of time. The mere abstract beauty of nature would soon pall upon my taste, I fear, without occupation.”

“But you would make occupation,” answered Edith earnestly; ‘you would find it. Occupation for the body is never wanting, where you have to improve, and cultivate, and ornament; and occupation for the mind flows in from a thousand gushing sources in God’s universe—even were one deprived of books and music.”

“Ay, but companionship, and social converse, and the interchange of thought with thought,” said the stranger—“where could one find those?” And he raised his eyes to her face.

“Have I not my brother and my father?” she asked.

“True,” said the other; “but I should have no such resource.”

He had seen a slight hesitation in her last reply. He thought that he had touched the point where the yoke of solitude galled the spirit. He was not one to plant or to nourish discontent in any one; and he turned at once to her brother, saying, “What, at the stream so early, my young friend? Have you had sport?”

“Not very great,” answered Walter; “my fish are few, but they are large. Look here.”

“I call such sport excellent,” observed the stranger, looking into the basket. “I must have you take me with you some fair morning; for I am a great lover of the angle.”

The lad hesitated, and turned somewhat redder in the cheek than he had been the moment before; but his sister saved him from reply, saying in a musing tone:—

“I cannot imagine what delight men find in what they call the sports of the field. To

inflict death may be a necessity, but surely should not be an amusement."

"Man is born a hunter, Miss Prevost," replied the stranger, with a smile: "he must chase something. It was at first a necessity, and it is still a pleasure when it is no longer a need. But the enjoyment is not truly in the infliction of death, but in the accessories. The eagerness of pursuit; the active exercise of the faculties, mental and corporeal; the excitement of expectation, and of success—nay, even of delay; the putting forth of skill and dexterity—all form part of the enjoyment. But there are, especially in angling, a thousand accidental pleasures. It leads one through lovely scenes; we meditate upon many things as we wander on; we gaze upon the dancing brook, or the still pool, and catch light from the light amidst the waters; all that we see is suggestive of thought—I might almost say of poetry. Ah, my dear young lady! few can

tell the enjoyment, in the midst of busy, active, troublous life, of one calm day's angling by the side of a fair stream with quiet beauty all around us, and no adversary but the speckled trout."

"And why should they be your foes?" asked Edith. "Why should you drag them from their cool, clear element, to pant and die in the dry upper air?"

"'Cause we want to eat 'em," uttered a voice from the door behind her: "*they* eats every thing. Why shouldn't *we* eat *them*? Darn this world! it is but a place for eating, and being eaten. The bivers that I trap eat fish; and many a cunning trick the crafty critters use to catch 'em: the minkes eat birds, and birds' eggs. Men talk about beasts of prey. Why, everything is a beast of prey, bating the oxen and the sheep, and such like; and sometimes I've thought it hard to kill them who never do harm to no one, and a great deal of good sometimes. But, as I was saying:

everything's a beast of prey. It's not lions, and tigers, and painters, and such ; but from the fox to the emmet, from the beetle to the bear, they're all alike, and man at the top o' them. Darn them all ! I kill 'em when I can catch 'em, ma'am, and always will. But come, master Walter, don't ye keep them fish in the sun. Give 'em to black Rosie, the cook, and let us have some on 'em for breakfast afore they're all wilted up."

The types of American character are very few—much fewer than the American people imagine. There are three or four original types very difficult to distinguish from their varieties ; and all the rest are mere modifications — variations on the same air. It is thus somewhat difficult to pourtray any character purely American, without the risk of displaying characteristics which have been sketched by more skilful hands. The outside of the man, however, affords greater scope than the inside ; for Americans are by no means

always long, thin, sinewy fellows, as they are too frequently represented ; and the man who now spoke was a specimen of a very different kind. He might be five feet five or six in height, and was anything but corpulent ; yet he was, in chest and shoulders, as broad as a bull ; and though the lower limbs were more lightly formed than the upper, yet the legs, as well as the arms, displayed the strong, rounded muscles swelling forth at every movement. His hair was as black as jet, without the slightest mixture of grey, though he could not be less than fifty-four or fifty-five years of age ; and his face, which was handsome, with features somewhat eagle-like, was browned by exposure to a color nearly resembling that of mahogany. With his shaggy bear-skin cap, well worn, and a frock of deer-skin, with the hair on, descending to the knees, he looked more like a bison or bonassus than anything human ; and, expecting to hear him roar, one was surprised to

trace tones soft and gentle, though rather nasal, to such a rude and rugged form.

While Walter carried his basket of fish to the kitchen, and Mr. Prevost's guest was gazing at the stranger, in whom Edith seemed to recognize an acquaintance, the master of the house himself appeared from behind the latter, saying, as he came—

“Let me make you acquainted with Mr. Brooks; Major Kielmansegge—Captain Jack Brooks.”

“Pooh, pooh, Prevost,” exclaimed the other. “Call me by my right name. I war Captain Brooks long ago. I'm new christened, and called Woodchuck now—that's because I burrow, Major. Them Ingians are wonderful circumdiferous; but they have found that, when they try tricks with me, I can burrow under them; and so they call me Woodchuck, 'cause it's a burrowing sort of a beast.”

“I do not exactly understand you,” replied.

the gentleman who had been called Major Kielmansegge ; “ what is the exact meaning of *circumdiferous* ? ”

“ It means just circumventing like,” answered the Woodchuck. “ First and foremost, there’s many of the Ingians—the Aloquin, for a sample—that never tell a word of truth. No, no, not they. One of them told me so plainly, one day : ‘ Woodchuck,’ says he, ‘ Ingian seldom tell truth. He know better than that. Truth too good a thing to be used every day : keep that for time of need.’ I believe, at that precious moment, he spoke the truth, the first time for forty years.”

The announcement that breakfast was ready, interrupted the explanation of Captain Brooks, but appeared to afford him great satisfaction ; and, at the meal, he certainly ate more than all the rest of the party put together, consuming everything set before him with a voracity truly marvellous. He seemed, indeed, to think

some apology necessary for his furious appetite.

“You see, Major,” he said, as soon as he could bring himself to a pause sufficiently long to utter a whole sentence, “I eat well when I *do* eat; for, sometimes, I get nothing for three or four days together. When I get to a lodge like this, I take in stores for my next voyage, as I can’t tell what port I shall touch at again.”

“Pray do you anticipate a long cruise just now?” asked the stranger.

“No, no,” answered the other, laughing; “but I always prepare against the worst. I am just going up the Mohawk, for a step or two, to make a trade with some of my friends of the Five Nations—the Iroquois, as the French folks call them. But I shall trot up afterwards to Sandy Hill and Fort Lyman, to see what is to be done there in the way of business. Fort Lyman I call it still, though

it should be Fort Edward now ; for, after the brush with Dieskau, it has changed its name. Ay, that was a sharp affair, Major. You'd ha' liked to bin there, I guess."

"Were you there, Captain?" asked Mr. Prevost. "I did not know you had seen so much service."

"Sure I was," answered Woodchuck, with a laugh ; "though, as to service, I did more than I was paid for, seeing I had no commission. I'll tell you how it war, Prevost: just in the beginning of September—it was the seventh or eighth, I think, in the year afore last, that is seventeen fifty-five—I was going up to the head of the lake to see if I could not get some peltry, for I had been unlucky down westward, and had made a bargain in Albany I did not like to break. Just on the top o' the, hill near where the King's road comes down to the ford, who should I stumble upon amongst the trees, but old Hendrik, as they called him—*why*, I can't tell—the Sachem of

the Tortoise totem of the Mohawks. He was there with three young men at his feet; but we were always good friends, he and I, and, over and above, I carried the calumet, so there was no danger. Well, we sat down and had a talk and he told me that the General—that is, Sir William, as he is now—had dug up the tomahawk, and was encamped near Fort Lyman to give battle to You-non-de-yoh—that is to say, in their jargon, the French Governor. He told me, too, that he was on his way to join the General, but that he did not intend to fight, but only to witness the brave deeds of the Corlear's men—that is to say the English. He was a cunning old fox, old Hendrik, and I fancied from that, he thought we should be defeated. But when I asked him, he said, no, that it was all on account of a dream he had had, forbidding him to fight, on the penalty of his scalp. So I told him I was minded to go with him and see the fun. Well, we mustered before the sun was quite down, well nigh upon

three hundred Mohawks all beautiful painted and feathered ; but they told me that they had not sung their war song, nor danced their war dance, before they left their lodges, so I could see well enough they had no intention to fight, and the tarnation devil wouldn't make 'em. How could we get to the camp where they were all busy throwing breast-works, and we heard that Dieskau was coming down from Hunter's in force ? The next morning early, we were told that he had turned back again from Fort Lyman ; and Johnson sent out Williams with seven or eight hundred men to get hold of his haunches. I tried hard to get old Hendrik to go along, for I stuck fast by my Ingians, knowing the brutes can be serviceable when you trust them. But the Sachem only grunted and did not stir. In an hour and a half we heard a mighty large rattle of muskets, and the Ingians could not stand the sound quietly, but began looking at their rifle-flints and fingering their tomahawks. Howsever,

they did not stir, and old Hendrik sat as grave and as brown as an old hemlock stump. Then we saw another party go out of camp to help the first; but in a very few minutes they came running back with Dieskau at their heels. In they tumbled, over the breast-works, head over heels any how; and a pretty little considerable quantity of fright they brought with them. If Diëskau had charged straight on that minute, we should have all been smashed to everlasting flinders; and I don't doubt, no more than that a beear's a crittar, that Hendrik and his painted devils would have had as many English scalps as French ones.

“ But Dieskau, like a stupid coon, pulled up short two hundred yards off, and Johnson did not give him much time to look about him, for he poured all the cannon-shot that he had got into him as hard as he could pelt. Well, the French Ingians—and there was a mighty sight of them—did not like that game of ball, and they squattered off to the right

and left—some into the trees, some into the swamps; and I couldn't stand it no longer, but up with my rifle, and give them all I had to give, and old Hendrik, seeing how things was like to go, took to the right end too, but a little too fast; for the old devil came into him, and he must needs have scalps. So out he went with the rest; and just as he had got his forefinger in the hair of a young Frenchman, whiz came a bullet into his dirty red skin, and down he went like an old moose. Some twenty of his Ingians got shot too; but, in the end, Dieskau had to run.

“Johnson was wounded too; and then folks have since said, that he had no right to the honor of the battle; but that it was Lyman's, who took the command when he could fight no longer. But that's all trash. Dieskau had missed his chance, and all his irregulars were sent skimming by the first fire long afore Johnson was hit. Lyman had nothing to do

but hold what Johnson left him, and pursue the enemy. The first he did well enough ; but the second he forgot to do—though he was a brave man and a good soldier, for all that.”

This little narrative seemed to give matter for thought both to Mr. Prevost and his English guest ; and, after a moment or two of somewhat gloomy consideration, the latter asked the narrator whether the friendly Indians had, on that occasion, received any special offence to account for their unwillingness to give active assistance to their allies, or whether their indifference proceeded merely from a fickle or treacherous disposition.

“ A little of both,” replied Captain Brooks. And, after leaning his great, broad forehead on his hand for a moment or two, in deep thought, he proceeded to give his view of the relations of the colonies with the Iroquois, in a manner and tone totally different from any he had used before. They were grave and almost stern ;

and his language had few, if any, of the coarse provincialisms with which he ordinarily seasoned his conversation.

“They are a queer people, the Indians,” he said, “and not so much savages as we are inclined to believe them. Sometimes I am ready to think that in one or two points they are more civilized than ourselves. They have not got our arts and sciences; and, as they possess no books, one set of them cannot store up the knowledge they gain in their own time to be added to by every generation of them that come after; and we all know that things which are sent down from mouth to mouth, are soon lost or corrupted. But they are always thinking; and they have a calmness and a coolness in their thoughts that we white men very often want. They are quick enough in action when once they have determined upon a thing; and for perseverance they beat all the world—but they take a long time to consider before they act; and it is really wonderful how quietly they do

consider, and how steadily they stick in consideration to all their own old notions.

“ We have not treated them well, sir ; and we never did. They have borne a great deal, and they will bear more still ; yet they feel and know it ; and some day they may make us feel it too. They have not the wit to take advantage, at present, of our divisions, and, by joining together themselves, make us feel all their power ; for they hate each other worse than they hate us. But, if the same spirit were to take the whole red men, that got hold of the Five Nations many a long year ago, and they were to band together against the whites, as those Five Nations did against the other tribes, they’d give us a great deal of trouble ; and though we might thrash them at first, we might teach them to thrash us in the end.

“ As it is, however, you see there are two sets of Indians and two sets of white men in this country : each as different from the other as anything can be. The Indians don’t say, as

they ought, ‘The country is ours, and we will fight against all the whites till we drive them out;’ but they say, ‘The whites are wiser and stronger than we are, and we will help those of them who are wisest and strongest.’

“I don’t mean to say that they have not got their likings and dislikings, or that they are not moved by kindness, or by being talked to; for they are great haters, and great likers. Still, what I have said is at the bottom of all their friendships with white men. The Dutchmen helped the Five Nations—Iroquois, as the French call them—gave them rifles and gunpowder against their enemies, and taught them to believe they were a very strong people. So the Five Nations liked the Dutch, and made alliance with them. Then came the English, and proved stronger than the Dutch, and the Five Nations attached themselves to the English.

“They have stuck fast to us for a long time, and would not go from us without cause.

If they could help to keep us great and powerful, they would, and I don't think a little adversity would make them turn. But to see us whipped and scalped would make them think a good deal ; and they won't stay long by a people they don't respect.

“ They have got their own notions, too, about faith, and want of faith. If you are quite friendly with them—altogether—out and out—they'll hold fast enough to their word with you ; but a very little turning, or shaking, or doubting, will make them think themselves free from all engagements ; and then take care of your scalp-lock. If I am quite sure, when I meet an Indian, that, as the good book says, ‘ *my* heart is right with *his* heart ;’ that I have never cheated him, or thought of cheating him ; that I have not doubted him, nor do doubt him—I can lie down and sleep in his lodge as safe as if I was in the heart of Albany. But I should not sleep a wink if I knew there was the least little bit of insincerity in my

own heart; for they are as 'cute as serpents, and they are not people to wait for explanations. Put your wit against theirs at the back of the forest, and you'll get the worse of it."

"But have we cheated, or attempted to cheat, these poor people?" asked the stranger.

"Why, the less we say about that the better, Major," replied Woodchuck, shaking his head. "They have had to bear a good deal; and now, when the time comes that we look as if we were going to the wall, perhaps they may remember it."

"But I hope and trust we are not exactly going to the wall," pursued the other, with his color somewhat heightened; "there has been a great deal said in England about mismanagement of our affairs on this continent, but I have always thought, being no very violent politician myself, that party spirit dictated criticisms which were probably unjust."

"There has been mismanagement enough,

Major," replied Woodchuck; "hasn't there, Prevost?"

"I fear so indeed," replied his host with a sigh; "but quite as much on the part of the colonial authorities, as on that of the government at home."

"And whose fault is that?" demanded Woodchuck, somewhat warmly; "why, that of the government at home too! Why do they appoint incompetent men? Why do they appoint ignorant men? Why do they exclude from every office of honor, trust, or emolument, the good men of the provinces, who know the situation and the wants and the habits of the provinces, and put over us men who, if they were the best men in the world, would be inferior, from want of experience, to our own people, but who are nothing more than a set of presuming, ignorant, grasping blood-suckers, who are chosen because they are related to a minister, or a minister's mistress, or perhaps

his valet, and whose only object is to make as much out of us as they can, and then get back again. I do not say that they are all so, but a great many of them are; and this is an insult and an injury to us."

He spoke evidently with a good deal of heat; but his feelings were those of a vast multitude of the American Colonists, and those feelings were preparing the way for a great revolution.

"Come, come Woodchuck," exclaimed Walter Prevost with a laugh, "you are growing warm; and when you are angry, you bite. The Major wants to hear your notions of the state of the English power here, and not your censure of the King's government."

"God bless King George!" cried Woodchuck warmly; "and send him all prosperity. There's not a more loyal man in the land than I am; but it vexes me all the more to see his ministers throwing away his people's hearts, and losing his possessions into the bargain. But

I'll tell you how it is Major—at least how I think it is—and then you'll see.

“I must first go back a bit. Here are we, the English, in the middle of North America; and we have got the French on both sides of us. Well, we have a right to the country all the way across the continent—and we *must* have it; for it is our only safety. But the French don't want us to be safe, and so they are trying to get behind us, and push us into the sea. They have been trying it a long time, and we have taken no notice. They have pushed their posts from Canidy, right along by the Wabash and the Ohio, from Lake Erie to the Mississippi; and they have built forts, won over the Ingians, drawing a string round us, which they will tighten every day, unless we cut it.

“And what have the ministers been doing all the time? Why, for a long time they did nothing at all. First, the French were suffered

boldly to call the country their own, and to carry off our traders and trappers, and send them into Canidy; and never a word said by our people. Then they built fort after fort, till troops can march, and goods can go, with little or no trouble, from Quebec to New Orleans; and all that this produced was a speech from Governor Hamilton, and a message from Governor Dinwiddie. The last, indeed, sent to England, and made representations; but all he got was an order to repel force by force, if he could, but to be quite sure that he did so on the *undoubted* territories of King George.

“Undoubted! Why, the French made the doubt, and then took advantage of it. Dinwiddie, however, had some spirit, and, with what help he could get, he began to build a fort himself, in the best chosen spot of the whole country, just by the meeting of the Ohio and the Monongahela. But he had only one man to the French ten, and not a regular company amongst them. So the French marched with a

thousand soldiers, and plenty of cannon and stores, turned his people out, took possession of his half-finished fort, and completed it themselves. That was not likely to make the Ingians respect us.

“Well, then, Colonel Washington, the Virginian, and the best man in the land, built Fort Necessity; but they left him without forces to defend it, and he was obliged to surrender to Villiers, and a force big enough to eat him up. That did not raise us with our redskins; and a French force never moved without a whole herd of Ingians, supposed to be in friendship with us, but ready to scalp us whenever we were defeated.

“Then came Braddock’s mad march upon Fort Du Quesne, where he and a’most all who was with him were killed by a handful of Ingians amongst the bushes—fifteen hundred men dispersed, killed, and scalped, by not four hundred savages—all the artillery taken, and baggage beyond count—think of that! Then

Shirley made a great parade of marching against Fort Niagara; but he turned back almost as soon as he set out; and, had it not been for some good luck, on the north side of Massachusetts' bay, and the victory of Johnson over Dieskau, you would not have had a tribe hold fast to us. They were all wavering as fast as they could—I could see that, as plain as possible, from old Hendrik's talk; and the French Jesuits were in amongst them day and night to bring the Five Nations over. This was the year afore last.

“ Well, what did they do last year? Nothing at all, but lose Oswego. Lord Loudun, and Abercrombie, and Webb, marched and counter-marched, and consulted, and played the fool, while bloody Montcalm was beseiging Mercer, taking Oswego, breaking the terms he had expressly granted, and suffering his Ingians to scalp and torture his prisoners of war before his eyes. Well, this was just about the middle of August; but it was judged too late to do

anything more, and nothing *was* done. There was merry work in Albany, and people danced and sang ; but the Ingians got a strange notion that the English lion was better at roaring than he was at biting.

“ And now, Major, what have we done this year to make up for all the blunders of the last five or six ? Why, Lord Loudun stripped the whole of this province of its men and guns, to go to Halifax and attack Louisburg. When he got to Halifax, he exercised his men for a month, heard a false report that Louisburg was too strong and too well prepared to be taken, and sailed back to New York. In the meanwhile, Montcalm took Fort William Henry on Lake George, and, as usual, let the garrison be butchered by his Ingians.

“ So, now the redskins see that the English arms are contemptible on every part of this continent, and the French complete masters of the lakes and the whole Western country. The Five Nations see their Long House open to

our enemies on three sides, and not a step taken to give them assistance or protection. We have abandoned *them*. Can you expect them not to abandon *us* ?”

The young officer, long before this painful question was asked, had leaned his elbows on the table, and covered his eyes and part of his face with his hand. Walter and Edith both gazed at him earnestly, while their father bent his eyes gloomily down on the table, all three knowing and sympathising with the feelings of a British officer while listening to such a detail. The expression of his countenance they could not see ; but the finely-cut ear, appearing from beneath the curls of his hair, glowed like fire before the speaker finished.

He did not answer, however, for more than a minute ; but then, raising his head with a look of stern gravity, he replied—

“ I cannot expect it. I cannot even understand how they have remained attached to us so long and so much.”

“The influence of one man has done a great deal,” replied Mr. Prevost. “Sir William Johnson is what is called the Indian agent; and, whatever may be thought of his military abilities, there can be no doubt that the Iroquois trust him, and love him more than they have ever trusted or loved a white man before. He is invariably just towards them, always keeps his word with them; he never yields to importunity or refuses to listen to reason; and he places that implicit confidence in them which enlists every thing that is noble in the Indian character in his favor. Thus, in his presence, and in their dealings with him, they are quite a different people from what they are with others—all their fine qualities are brought into action, and all their wild passions are stilled.”

“I should like to see them as they really are,” exclaimed the young officer, eagerly. And then, turning to Woodchuck, he said—

“ You tell me you are going amongst them, my friend ; can you not take me with you ? ”

“ Wait three days and I will,” replied the other. “ I am first going up the Mohawk, as I told you, close by Sir William’s castle and hall, as he calls the places. You’d see little there ; but, if you will promise to do just as I tell you, and mind advice, I’ll take you up to Sandy Hill and the creek, where you’ll see enough of them. That will be arter I come back on Friday about noon.”

Mr. Prevost looked at the young officer, and he at his entertainer ; and then the former said—

“ When will you bring him back, Captain ? He must be here again by next Tuesday night.”

“ That he shall be, with or without his scalp,” answered Woodchuck, with a laugh. “ You get him ready to go ; for you know, Prevost, the forest is not the parade-ground.”

“ I will lend him my Gakaah and Gischa

and Gostoweh," cried Walter. "We will make him quite an Indian."

"No, no!" answered Woodchuck, "that won't do, Walter. The man who tries to please an Ingian by acting like an Ingian, makes naught of it. They know it's a cheat, and they don't like it. We have our ways, and they have theirs; and let each keep their own like honest men. So I think, and so the Ingians think. Putting on a lion's skin will never make a man a lion. Get the Major some good tough leggins, and a coat that won't tear; a rifle and an axe and a wood-knife—a bottle of brandy is no bad thing. But don't forget a calumet and a pouch of tobacco, for both may be needful. So now good bye to ye all. I must trot."

Thus saying, he rose from the table, and, without more ceremonious adieu, left the room.

CHAPTER VI.

“How sweet she looks!” exclaimed a man of nearly my own age—a man most distinguished in his own land—as we gazed on a young and lovely girl, near and dear to us both as our own child—soon to become my child in law as she already is in affection. “How sweet she looks!”

The words set me thinking. What was it in which that sweetness consisted? Sweetness as of the song of a bird, or the ambrosial breathing of a flower—sweetness as of an entrancing melody, which had its solemn sadness as well as its delight—sweetness which carried the soul on its wings of perfume into the far future, to gather

in the land of dreams, with the trembling awe of fear-touched hope, the mystic signs of her future destiny. It consisted not in the lovely lines of the features, in the exquisite hues of the complexion, in the beautiful symmetry of the form. But it consisted in that nameless, unphonetic, but ever lucid, hieroglyph of the heart—expression—expression in form as well as in face—in tranquillity as well as in movement—in the undefined and undefinable beauty of beauties—grace.

“ *La grace encore plus belle que la beauté.* ”

Grace which no art can ever attain, though it may imitate. Grace which is the gift of God to the body—to the mind—to the spirit. Grace which, in our pristine state, was, doubtless, common to all the three, blending taste, and reason, and religion, in one harmony almost divine—breathing forth from the earthly form in the image of its Maker, and which lingers

yet, and breathes forth still, in the pure and the innocent and the bright.

Such grace was in Edith Prevost ; and hard or pre-occupied must have been the heart that could resist it. She was certainly very beautiful, too, and of that beauty the most attractive. Though so young, her fully-developed form left maturity but little to add ; and every swelling line flowed into the other with symmetry the most perfect. The rich, warm, glossy curls of her nut-brown hair, unstained and unrestrained by any of the frightful conceits of the day, wantoned round her ivory forehead in lines all in harmony with her figure and her features, and in hue contrasting, yet harmonizing, with her complexion, in its soft, rich warmth ; fair, yet glowing with a hardly perceptible shade of brown, such as that which distinguishes the Parian marble from the stone of Carrara. Then her liquid, hazel eyes, full of ever-varied expression—now sparkling with gay, free joy, now full of tender light (especially when they turned upon

her father,) and now shaded with a sleepy sort of thoughtfulness, when one of her day dreams fell upon her. There was something moreover in her manner—in her whole demeanor—which lent another charm to beauty, and added grace to grace. Yet it was of a kind difficult to define. I cannot describe it; I can only tell how she came by it.

I have shewn that, in early years, she had been educated in a land where civilization and refinement were carried to their highest point; but it is necessary to add, that her education there had been conducted in the midst of the most refined society of that land, and by those in whom refinement had been a quality, rather than an acquisition. She had it, too, as an hereditary right: it was in her blood, and in her nature; and, until she was nearly fourteen years of age, everything that father or mother could do, was done, to cultivate the rich soil of her mind and her heart—remember, to cultivate,

not to alter: it needed no change. Every natural grace remained entire, and many a bright gift was added.

Then suddenly she was transplanted to a scene where all was wild—where there were no conventionalities—where Nature ruled, and was the rule. She came there exactly at the age when, without losing one particle of that which society could confer that was worth retaining, the mind—the fresh, young mind—was ready to receive a peculiar tone from the wild things around her, a freedom, an innocent carelessness of the trifles magnified into false importance in a more artificial state. Feeling, knowing, that she was a lady, that every thought was pure and bright, that every purpose was noble and true, she had no fear of infringing small proprieties; she had no thought of that dread bug-bear of the multitude, “*what the world would say.*” Thus, while habit rendered all refined, and while heart and innocence gave dignity and calmness,

she had all the free, frank, heartfelt confidence of untutored nature.

Such was Edith Prevost, and such she appeared to the stranger who had visited her father's house. At first, perhaps, he did not comprehend her fully; but he was a man of keen perceptions and a great and noble heart. Within his breast and hers were those sympathies which are keys to open the doors of character; and he had not been four-and-twenty hours under the same roof before he knew her, and appreciated her entirely. He had seen much of the world, much of society; and perhaps that which is false and wrong therein had been over-estimated by a mind somewhat too clear-sighted for much happiness. At all events, he had passed through life hitherto heart-whole and untouched with love; and he felt fearless and confident from the experience of security. Thus he boldly made the character of Edith a study; scanned it accurately—watched every little trait—dwelt

upon her beauty and her grace, and took pleasure in eliciting all that was bright and lovely. Imprudent man ! He had never met any one like her before.

She, too, in unconscious frankness, without thought or design, was led on, by new and fresh association, to open all the treasures of her mind to her new friend, not knowing how they might dazzle ; and her brother and her father both aided, unthinkingly, in the same course.

When Brooks had left them, half an hour was spent in one of those pleasant after-breakfast dreams, when the mind seems to take a moment's hesitating pause before grappling with the active business of the day. But little was said ; each gazed forth from window or from door—each thought, perhaps, of the other—and each drank in sweet sensation from the scene before the eyes.

Each thought of the other, I have said ; and,

when such is the case, how infinite are the varieties into which thought moulds itself !

Walter paused and pondered upon the stranger's state and objects—asked himself who he was—what could be his errand—how, why, he came thither. Major Kielmansegge he knew him not to be. A chance word had shown him not only his rank and station, but had shown also that there was a secret to be kept—a secret to which his imagination, perhaps, lent more importance than it deserved. He was an English peer, the young man knew, one of a rank with which, in former years, he had been accustomed to mingle, and for which, notwithstanding all that had passed, and lapse of time, and varied circumstances, he retained an habitual veneration. But what could have led a British Peer to that secluded spot? what could be the circumstances which, having led him thither, had suddenly changed his purpose of proceeding onward, and induced him to re-

main a guest in his father's cottage, in a state of half concealment? Could it be Lord Loudun, he asked himself, the commander-in-chief of the royal forces, whose conduct had been so severely censured in his own ears by the man just gone?

Youth always leaves a thousand things out of calculation, and darts at its conclusions with rapidity that overleaps the real end; and thus, what with the military bearing, the secrecy, a certain degree of reserve of manner, and an air of command, he argued himself into the belief that their guest was certainly the general of whom they had heard so much and knew so little; without at all considering how unlikely it was, that so important a command should be entrusted to one so young. It did not, indeed, raise the stranger in his esteem, or in his regard, to believe him to be Lord Loudun; for this nobleman had not won the good will of the people of the province, nor secured their approbation. They had perhaps expected too much

from his coming, and had been bitterly disappointed by the result.

Edith thought of his rank and station not at all. Some of his words lingered in her ear, and afforded matter for the mind to work with. They were not such as she had heard for long. They were different even, in some respects, from any that she remembered. There was nothing light in them, nothing frivolous ; but, combined with the tone and manner, they gave the impression that they sprang from a mind deep, powerful, self-relying, cultivated and enriched by study and observation, and full of activity and eagerness. She might enquire what sort of heart was united with that mind ; she might be doubtful of it ; for she had not much experience, and she knew not how often men, in mere sport, or to elicit the shy secrets of woman's heart, or for idle vanity or light caprice, utter that which they do not feel, affect a character they do not possess, and often inferior to their own.

She did not make up her mind hastily, however. Indeed she had not yet sufficient interest in the object of her thoughts, to care much about making up her mind at all. She thought him a very handsome and a very agreeable man, sufficiently odd, or different from the common run, to excite some interest, yet with an oddity, in no degree offensive; but that was all. She knew that he had only come for a day, and that, though some accidental meeting with Sir William Johnson had induced him to protract his stay, it would probably only be for a day or two longer. Then he would go: his shadow would pass away from the floor, and his memory from her mind—she thought.

Accident! Who is there that believes in accident? On my life, it requires more faith to conceive such a thing as accident, than to believe in the divinity of Juggernaut. The only reason why any man can imagine such a thing, is because he sees not the causes which bring to pass the event which he calls an accident; and yet

he perceives the hands of a clock move round the dial, without beholding the springs and wheels, and never dreams it is by accident that the bell chimes noon. Let any man look through the strange concatenation of event with event, through the course of his own life, and dream of accident, if he can.

It was not by accident that Lord H——and Edith Prevost met there. It was for the working out of their mutual destiny, under the will of God ; for, if there be a God, there is a special Providence.

“This is very lovely, Miss Prevost,” said the young soldier, when the long meditative lapse was drawing to a close ; “but I should think the scene would become somewhat monotonous. Hemmed in by these woods, the country round, though beautiful in itself, must pall upon the taste.”

“Oh, no !” cried Edith, eagerly ; “it is full of variety. Each day affords something new ; and every morning’s walk displays a thou-

sand fresh beauties. Let us go and take a ramble, if you have nothing better to do ; and I will soon show you there is no monotony. Come, Walter, take your rifle and go with us. Father, this is not your hour. Can you never come before the sun has passed his height, and see the shadows fall the other way ?”

“Mine is the evening hour, my child,” answered Mr. Prevost, somewhat sadly ; “ but go, Edith, and show our noble friend the scenes you so much delight in. He will need something to make his stay in this dull place somewhat less heavy.”

The stranger made no complimentary reply ; for his thoughts were busy with Edith, and he was, at that moment, comparing her frank, unconscious, undesigning offer to lead him through love-like woods and glades with the wily hesitations of a court coquette.

“ Perhaps you are not disposed to walk ?” said Edith, marking his reverie, and startling him from it.

“I shall be delighted,” he said, eagerly, and truly, too. “You must forgive me for being somewhat absent, Miss Prevost. Your father knows I have much to think of, though, indeed, thought at present is vain ; and you will confer a boon by banishing that idle but importunate companion.”

“Oh, then, you shall not think at all while you are with me,” returned Edith, smiling.

And away she ran, to cover her head with one of those black wimples very generally worn by the women of that day.

CHAPTER VII.

LET us see what can be made out of a walk. It began with a bad number, though one that is generally assumed to be lucky. But, on the present occasion, no one felt himself the third ; and Walter, and Edith, and Lord H——, conversed as freely as if only two had been present. First came a discussion between Edith and her brother as to what path they should take ; and then they referred it to their companion, and he, with a smile, reminded them that he knew none but that by which he had come thither ; and so Edith had her own way, and led towards the west.

By dint of labour and taste, aided, in some degree, by accident, not less than fifty acres of ground had been cleared around the house of Mr. Prevost—not partially cleared, with large, black stumps of trees sticking up in the fields, and assuming every sort of strange form, all hideous; but perfectly and entirely, leaving the ground (some part of which had, indeed, been free of forest when Mr. Prevost first settled there) smooth and trim as that of the fair farms of England. The fences, too, were all in good order; and the buildings neat and picturesque.

Beyond the cultivated ground, as you descended the gentle hill, lay the deep forest, at the distance of about three hundred yards; and at its edge Edith paused, and made her companion turn to see how beautiful the cottage looked upon its eminence, shaded by gorgeous maple-trees, in their gold and crimson garb of autumn, with a tall rock or two, grey and mossy, rising up amidst them.

Lord H—— gazed at the house, and saw that it was picturesque and beautiful—very different, indeed, from any other dwelling he had beheld on the Western side of the Atlantic; but his eyes expressed an absent thoughtfulness; and Edith thought he did not admire it half enough.

Close by the spot where she had stopped, appeared the entrance of a broad road, cut, probably, by the Dutch settlers many years before. It could not be called good, for it was furrowed and indented with many a rut and hollow, and roughened by obtrusive stones and rock; but there were no stumps of trees upon it, no fallen trunks lying across, which, for a forest road in America, at that time, was rare perfection. For about a quarter of a mile, it was bordered on each side by tangled thicket, with gigantic pine trees rising out of an impenetrable mass of underwood, in which berries of many a hue supplied the place of flowers.

But flowers seem hardly wanting to an American autumn ; for almost every leaf becomes a flower, and the whole forest glows with all the hues of yellow, red, and green, from the soft primrose-color of the fading white wood and sycamore, through every tint of orange, scarlet, and crimson on the maple, and of yellow and green on the larch, the pine, and the hemlock.

“How strange are man’s prejudices and prepossessions !” ejaculated Lord H——, as they paused to gaze at a spot where a large extent of woodland lay open to the eye below them. “We are incredulous of everything we have not seen, or to the conception of which we have not been led by very near approaches. Had any one shown me, before I reached these shores, a picture of an autumn scene in America, though it had been perfect as a portrait, hue for hue, or even inferior in its striking coloring to the reality, I should have

laughed at it as a most extravagant exaggeration. Did not the first autumn you passed here make you think yourself in fairy land?"

"No; I was prepared for it," replied Edith; "my father had described the autumn scenery to me often before we came."

"Then was he ever in America before he came to settle?" asked her companion.

"Yes, once," answered Edith. She spoke in a very grave tone, and then ceased suddenly.

But her brother took the subject up with a boy's frankness, saying—

"Did you never hear that my grandfather and my father's sister both died in Virginia? He was in command there, and my father came over just before my birth."

"It is a long story, and a sad one, my lord," interposed Edith, with a sigh; "but look now, as we mount the hill, how the scene changes. Every step upon the hill-side gives us a different sort of tree, and the brush disappears from

amidst the trunks. This grove is my favorite evening seat, where I can read and think under the broad shady boughs, with nothing but beautiful sights around me."

They had reached a spot where, upon the summit of an eminence, numbers of large oaks crested the forest. Wide apart, and taller than the English oak, though not so large in stem, the trees suffered the eye to wander over the grassy ground, somewhat broken by rock, which sloped down between hundreds of large bolls to the tops of the lower forest trees, and thence to a scene of almost matchless beauty beyond. Still slanting downwards with a gentle sweep the woodlands were seen approaching the banks of a small lake, about two miles distant, while, beyond the sheet of water, which lay glittering like gold in the clear morning sunshine, rose up high purple hills, with the shadows of grand clouds floating over them. Around the lake, on every side, were rocky promontories and slanting points of lower land jutting out into

the water ; and, where they stood above, they could see all the fair features of the scene itself, and the images of the clouds and sky redoubled by the golden mirror. To give another charm to the spot, and make ear and eye combine in enjoyment, the voices of distant waters came upon the breeze, not with a roar exactly, but with rather more than a murmur, shewing that some large river was pouring over a steep not far away.

“ Hark !” ejaculated Lord H——. “ Is there a waterfall near ?”

“ Too far to go to it to-day,” answered Edith. “ We must economize our scenes, lest we should exhaust them all before you go, and you should think more than ever that our country wants variety.”

“ I cannot think so with that prospect before my eyes,” replied the young nobleman. “ Look how it has changed already ! The mountain is all in shade, and so is the lake ; but those low, wavy, wood-covered hills, which lie between

the two, are starting out in the prominence of sunshine. A truly beautiful scene is full of variety in itself. Every day changes its aspect, every hour, every season. The light of morning, and evening, and mid-day, alter it entirely ; and the spring and the summer, the autumn and the winter, robe it in different hues. I have often thought that a fair landscape is like a fine mind, in which every varying event of life brings forth new beauties."

"Alas, that the mind is not always like the landscape !" exclaimed Edith. "God willed it so, I doubt not, for there is harmony in all His works ; but man's will and God's will are not always one."

"Perhaps, after all," said her companion, thoughtfully, "the best way to keep them in harmony is for man, as much as may be, to recur to Nature, which is but an expression of God's will."

"Oh, yes !" cried Walter Prevost, eagerly, "I am sure the more we give ourselves up to

the factitious and insincere contrivances of what we call society, the more we alienate ourselves from truth and God."

The young nobleman gazed at him with a smile almost melancholy.

"Very young," he thought, "to come to such sad conclusions. But do you not, my friend Walter," added he, aloud, "think there might be such a thing as extracting from society all that is good and fine in it, and leaving the chaff and dross for others? The simile of the bee and the poisonous flower holds good with man. Let us take what is sweet and beneficial in all we find growing in the world's garden, and reject all that is worthless, poisonous, and foul. But truly this is an enchanting scene. It wants, methinks, only the figure of an Indian in the foreground. And there comes one, I fancy, to fill up the picture.—Stay, stay, we shall want no rifles. It is but a woman coming through the trees."

"It is Otaitsa—it is the Blossom!" cried

Edith and Walter, in a breath, as they looked forward to a spot where, across the yellow sunshine as it streamed through the trees, a female figure, clad in the gaily-embroidered and brightly-coloured *gakaah* or petticoat of the Indian women, was seen advancing with a rapid yet somewhat doubtful step.

Without pause or hesitation, Edith sprang forward to meet the new comer, and, in a moment after, the beautiful arms of the Indian girl who had sat with Walter in the morning, were round the fair form of his sister, and her lips pressed on hers. There was a warmth and eagerness in their meeting, unusual on the part of the red race; but, while the young Oneida almost lay upon the bosom of her white friend, her beautiful dark eyes were turned towards her lover, as, with a mixture of the bashful feelings of youth and the consciousness of having something to conceal, Walter, with a glowing cheek, lingered a step or two behind his sister.

“Art thou coming to our lodge, dear Blossom ?” asked Edith, and then added, “Where is thy father ?”

“We both come,” answered the girl, in fluent English, with no more of the Indian accent than served to give a peculiar softness to her tones. “I wait the Black Eagle here since dawn of day. He has gone towards the morning, with our father the White Heron ; for we heard of Hurons by the side of Corlear, and some thought the hatchet would be unburied ; so he journeyed to hear more from our friends by the Horicon, and bade me stay and tell you and our brother Walter to forbear that road if I saw you turn your eyes towards the east wind. He and the White Heron will be by your father’s council-fire with the first star.”

A good deal of this speech was unintelligible to Lord H——, who had now approached, and on whom Blossom’s eyes were turned with

a sort of timid and inquiring look. But Walter hastened to interpret, saying—

“She means that her father and the missionary, Mr. Gore, have heard that there are hostile Indians on the shores of Lake Champlain, and have gone down towards Lake George to inquire ; for Black Eagle—that is her father—is much our friend, and he always fancies that my father has chosen a dangerous situation here just at the verge of the territory of the Five Nations, or their Long House as they call it.”

“Well, come to the lodge with us, dear Blossom,” said Edith, while her brother was giving this explanation ; “thou knowest my father loves thee well, and will be glad to have the Blossom with us. Here, too, is an English chief dwelling with us, who knows not what sweet blossoms grow on Indian trees.”

But the girl shook her head, saying—

“Nay, I must do the father’s will. It was

with much praying that he let me come hither with him; and he bade me stay here from the white rock to the stream. So I must obey."

"But it may be dangerous," replied Edith, "if there be Hurons so near; and it is sadly solitary, dear sister."

"Then stay with me for a while," said the girl, who could not affect to deny that her lonely watch was somewhat gloomy.

"I will stay with her, and protect her," cried Walter, eagerly; "for, dearest Blossom, should there be danger, my sister must fly to the lodge."

"Yes, stay with her, Walter. Oh yes, stay with her," ejaculated the unconscious Edith. And so it was settled, for Otaita made no opposition, though, with a cheek in which something glowed warmly through the brown, and with a lip that curled gently with a meaning smile, she said—

"Perhaps my brother Walter would be

elsewhere? He may find a long watch wearisome on the hill and in the wood."

Well was it that others were present, or the lips that spoke would have paid for their insincerity. But, perhaps, the Blossom would not have so spoken had they been alone; for woman feels a fear of playfulness, and knows that it needs a safeguard; while deep passion and pure tenderness seem to have a holy safeguard in themselves, and often in their very weakness find strength.

"Let us stay awhile ourselves," said Lord H——, seating himself on the grass, and gazing forth with a look of interest over the prospect: "methinks this is a place where one may well dream away an hour, without the busiest mind reproaching itself for inactivity."

There was no ceremony certainly in his manner, and yet no assumption. Had there been older persons present, women nearer his own age, perhaps the formal decorums of the time might have put upon him a more cere-

monious bearing : he might have asked their wishes—waited till they were seated—bowed and assisted them to a commodious spot. But Edith was so young, that a feeling of her being almost a child was unconsciously present in his mind—a very dangerous feeling, inasmuch as it put him wholly off his guard ; and, acting as plain nature taught, he cast himself down there to enjoy an hour of pleasant idleness, in a beautiful scene, with one too lovely, too deep-toned in mind—ay, too mature in heart and in body—to be so treated with impunity.

That hour passed by, and another came and went, while into his thoughts and into his breast's inmost caves were stealing strange new sensations. A dreamy charm was over him, a golden spell around him, more powerful than Circe ever threw, or the Syren ever sung. Oh, the Lotus !—he was eating the Lotus : that sweet fruit, the magic taste of which could never be forgotten—which was destined thence-

forth and for ever to draw him back, with irresistible power, to the spot where it grew.

Surely, that nectareous fruit, which transformed the whole spirit into desire for itself, was but an image of love, pure and bright, growing wild upon the bank of the sacred river. And the first taste, too, gave no warning of its power. Thus he was all unconscious of what was coming over him; but yielded himself calmly to the enjoyment of the moment, and imagined that in the next he could be free again in every thought.

The reader may ask—"Was he thus early in love? Had the impassioned haste of Italian love—the love of Romeo and Juliet—flown across the wide Atlantic?"

No! I answer, no. But he was yielding himself to thoughts and feelings, scenes, circumstances, and companionships, which were sure to light it up in his heart—yielding without resistance. He was tasting the Lotus-fruit; and its effects were inevitable.

For two hours, the four companions sat there on the hill-side, beneath the tall, shady trees, with the wind breathing softly upon them—the lake glittering before their eyes—the murmur of the waterfall sending music through the air. But to the young Englishman these were but accessories. The fair face of Edith was before his eyes, the melody of her voice in his ear.

At length, however, they rose to go, promising to send one of the slaves from the house with food for Walter and Otaita at the hour of noon; and Lord H—— and his fair companion took their way back towards the house.

The distance was not very far; but they were somewhat long upon the way. They walked slowly back, and by a different path from that by which they went: and often they stopped to admire some pleasant scene; often Lord H—— had to assist his fair companion over some rock, and her soft hand rested in his. He gathered flowers for her—the fringed gentia and other late blossoms; they paused to ex-

amine them closely, and comment on their loveliness. Once he made her sit down beside him on a bank, and tell the names of all the different trees ; and from trees his conversation went on into strange, dreamy, indefinite talk of human things and human hearts.

Thus noon was not far distant when they reached the house ; and both Edith and her companion were very thoughtful.

CHAPTER VIII.

EDITH was very thoughtful through the rest of the day. Was it of herself she thought? Was it of him who had been her companion through the greater part of the morning? Hardly at all.

Hast thou not heard, reader, in eastern fable, of springs of deep, clear water covered from the eye of passing strangers by a sealed stone; and how, when he who has the talismanic secret approaches and says the words of power, or makes the sign, the sealed fountain opens its cool treasure, and the bright stream wells forth? Such is woman's love.

No word had been spoken, no sign had been

given; no intimation to make the seal on the fountain indicate that the master of its destiny was near. Edith had had a pleasant ramble with one such as she seldom saw—and that was all. That he was different from the common multitude—higher, brighter, nobler in his thoughts—she had gathered from their short acquaintance; and so far she might be led to think of him somewhat more than she thought of other men. But her meditations had another object. Her mind was attracted strongly in another direction.

It is strange, how clearly and how willingly women look into the hearts of others—how dimly, how reluctantly, they see into their own. There had been something in the manner of her brother Walter, a hesitation, and yet an eagerness, a timidity unnatural, with a warmth that spoke of passion, which had not escaped her eye. In the sweet Indian girl, too, she had seen signs not equivocal: the fluttering blush; the look full of soul and feeling; the

glance suddenly raised to the boy's face, and suddenly withdrawn; the eyes full of liquid light, now beaming brightly under sudden emotion, now shaded beneath the long fringe, like the moon behind a passing cloud.

They were signs that Edith did not mistake; and they were for her suggestive of thoughtfulness.

It might tire the reader, were we to trace all the considerations that chased one another through her mind, or to tell how, for the first time—when she thought of her brother wedding an Indian girl, linking his fate for ever to the savages of the woods—she realized the consequences of the solitary life her father had chosen, of the removal from civilization, of the life in the wild forest.

For the first time, it seemed to her that a dark, impenetrable curtain was falling between herself and all the ancient things of history: that all, indeed, was to be new, and strange, and different. And yet she loved Otaita well, and, in the last two years, had seen many a

trait which had won esteem as well as love. The old Black Eagle, as her father was called, had ever been a fast and faithful ally of the English ; but to Mr. Prevost he had attached himself in a particular manner. An accidental journey on the part of the old Sachem, had first brought them acquainted, and from that day forward the distance of the Oneida settlements was no impediment to their meeting. Whenever the Black Eagle left his lodge, he was sure, in his own figurative language, to wing his flight sooner or later towards the nest of his white brother ; and, in despite of Indian habits, he almost invariably brought his daughter with him. When any distant or perilous enterprise was on hand, Otaitsa was left at the lodge of the English family ; and many a week she had passed there at a time, loved by, and loving, all its inmates.

It was not there, however, that she had acquired her knowledge of the English tongue, or the other characteristics which dis-

tinguished her from the ordinary Indian women. When she first appeared there, she spoke the language of the settlers as perfectly as they did ; and it was soon discovered that from infancy she had been under the care and instruction of one of the English missionaries—at that time, alas, few—who had sacrificed all that civilized life could bestow for the purpose of bringing the Indian savage into the fold of Christ.

Nor was it altogether rare in those days to find an Indian woman adopting, to a considerable degree, the habits and manners of the Europeans. The celebrated Queen of Hearts, who played so important a part in the conspiracy of Pontiac, went even farther than Otaitsa, for she assumed the garb of the French, while the latter always retained the dress of her own nation, and was proud of her Indian blood. And yet it was with a sort of melancholy pride ; for she would frankly acknowledge the superiority of the white race, and the advantage of the civilization which her

own people did not possess. It was, perhaps, rather like the clinging affection which binds the noble-hearted to the falling and unfortunate than that vainer sort of pride which fancies a reflected light to fall upon ourselves through connexion with the powerful and the prosperous.

Whatever she was—whatever was high and bright in her nature—she was still the Indian maiden ; and as such only could Edith look upon her when she thought of the love between her brother and Otaita, which had become but too apparent to her eyes.

Then again she asked herself, how should she act towards Walter, towards her father. Could she direct his attention to that which was so evident to her ? Oh, no ! She felt as if it would be betraying a secret entrusted to her keeping. True, no word had been spoken, no confession made ; still they had both unveiled their hearts to eyes they believed friendly, and she would not take advantage of

the knowledge so acquired. Her father could and would see, she thought, and he would then judge for himself, and act according to his judgment.

But Edith did not know how little and how rarely men see into such secrets--especially men of studious habits. Mr. Prevost judged it quite right that Walter should stay with Otaitsa, and he even sent out the old slave Agrippa, who, somehow, was famous as a marksman, with a rifle on his shoulder, to act as a sort of scout upon the hill side, and watch for anything bearing a hostile aspect.

After dinner, too, he walked out himself, and sat, for an hour, with his son and the Indian girl, speaking words of affection to her that sank deep into her heart, and more than once brought drops into her bright eyes. No father's tenderness could exceed that he showed her; and Otaitsa felt as if he were almost welcoming her as a daughter.

When Mr. Prevost returned to the house, he

gave himself up to conversation with his guest, transporting his spirit far away from the scenes before him to other lands and other times. Matters of taste and art were discussed : the imperishable works of genius, and the triumphs of mind ; and, from time to time, the musical tones of Edith's voice mingled with the deeper sounds of her two companions. It was a pleasant afternoon to all, for Mr. Prevost was himself somewhat of a dreamer ; and he, or Edith, or both, perhaps, had taught Lord H——, for the time, at least, to be a dreamer also.

Nor were higher topics left untouched. No where so well as in wide solitudes can the spirit feel itself free to deal with its own mighty questions. The pealing organ and the sounding choir may give a devotional tone to the mind ; and the tall pillar and the dusty aisle may afford solemnity to the thoughts ; but would you have the spirit climb from the heart's small, secret chamber towards the foot-

steps of the throne of God, and bring back some rays of brighter light to illuminate the darkness of our earthly being, choose the temple unprofaned of his own creation : stand and contemplate His Might and Majesty amidst the solemn woods or on the awful mountain-tops: or gaze with the astronomer at the distant stars, resolving filmy clouds into innumerable worlds, and separating specks of light into suns and systems.

Evening had not lost its light, when a shout from Walter's voice, announced that he was drawing nigh the house; and, in a moment after, he was seen coming across the cleared land, with his bright young companion, and two other persons.

One was a tall, red man, upwards of six feet in height, dressed completely in the Indian garb, but without paint. He could not have been less than sixty years of age; but his strong muscles seemed to have set at defiance the bending power of time. He was as up-

right as a pine, and he bore his heavy rifle in his right hand as lightly as if it had been a reed. In his left he carried a long pipe, showing that his errand was one of peace ; but tomahawk and scalping knife were in his belt, and he wore the sort of feather crown or Gostoweh distinguishing the chief.

The other man might be of the same age, or a little older. He, too, seemed active and strong for his years ; but he wanted the erect and powerful bearing of his companion ; and his gait and carriage, as much as his features and complexion, distinguished him from the Indian. His dress was a strange mixture of the ordinary European costume, and that of the half savage rangers of the forest. He wore a black coat, or one which had once been black ; but the rest of his garments were composed of skins, some tanned into red leather, after the Indian fashion, some with the hair still on, and turned outwards. He bore no arms whatever, unless a very long and

sharp-pointed knife could be considered a weapon, though in his hands it only served the innocent purpose of dividing his food, or carving willow whistles for the children of the Sachem's tribe.

Running, with a light foot, by the side of the chief, as he strode along, came Otaitsa; but the others followed the Indian fashion, coming after him in single file, while old Agrippa, with his rifle on his arm, brought up the rear, appearing from the wood somewhat behind the rest.

"It is seldom I have so many parties of guests in two short days," said Mr. Prevost, moving towards the door. "Generally, I have either a whole tribe at once, or none at all. But this is one of my best friends, my Lord, and I must go to welcome him."

"He is a noble-looking man," observed the young officer. "This is the Black Eagle, I suppose, whom the pretty maiden talked of."

Mr. Prevost made no reply, for, by this

time, the chief's long strides had brought him almost to the door, and his hand was already extended to grasp that of his white friend.

"Welcome, Black Eagle!" said Mr. Prevost.

"Thou art my brother," returned the chief, in English, but with a much less pure accent than that of his daughter.

"What news from Corlear?" asked Mr. Prevost.

But the Indian answered not; and the man who followed him replied in so peculiar a style, that we must give his words, though they imported very little, as far as the events to be related are concerned.

"All is still on the banks of Champlain Lake," he said; "but Huron tracks are still upon the shore. The friendly Mohawks watched them come and go; and tell us that the Frenchman, too, was there, painted and feathered like the Indian chiefs; but finding England stronger than they thought, upon the

side of Horicon, they sailed back to Fort Carrillon on Monday last."

For awhile, Lord H—— was completely puzzled to discover what it was that gave such peculiarity to the missionary's language; for the words and accents were both those of an ordinary Englishman of no very superior education; and it was not till Mr. Gore had uttered one or two sentences more, that he perceived that everything he said arranged itself into a sort of blank verse, not very poetical, not very musical, but easily enough to be scanned.

In the meanwhile, the Black Eagle and his host had entered the house, and proceeded straight to the great eating hall, where the whole party seated themselves in silence, Otaitsa taking her place close to the side of Edith, and Walter stationing himself where he could watch the bright girl's eyes without being remarked himself.

For a moment or two, no one spoke, in deference

to the Indian habits ; and then Mr. Prevost broke silence, saying—

“ Well, Black Eagle, how fares it with my brother ?”

“ As with the tamarack in the autumn,” answered the warrior ; the “ cold wind sighs through the branches, and the fine leaves wither and fall ; but the trunk stands firm as yet, and decay has not reached the heart.”

“ This is a chief from the land of my white fathers,” said Mr. Prevost, waving his hand gracefully towards Lord H—— ; “ he has but lately crossed the great water.”

“ He is welcome to what was once the red man’s land,” said Black Eagle ; and, bending his eyes upon the ground, but without any sign of emotion at the thoughts which seemed to lie beneath his words, he relapsed into silence for a minute or two. Then raising his head again, he asked, “ Is he a great chief ? Is he a warrior ? or a man of council ? or a medicine man ?”

“He is a great chief and a warrior,” answered Mr. Prevost ; “he is moreover skilful in council, and his words are clear as the waters of Horicon.”

“He is welcome,” repeated the chief ; “he is our brother. He shall be called the Cataract, because he shall be powerful, and many shall rejoice at the sound of a strong voice.—But my brother—”

“Speak on,” said Mr. Prevost, seeing that he paused ; “they are friends’ ears that listen.”

“Thou art too near the Caturqui ; thou art too near to Corlear,” said the warrior, meaning, the river St. Lawrence and Lake Champlain. “There is danger for our brother ; and the wings of the Black Eagle droop when he is in his solitary place afar amidst the children of the Stone, to think that thou art not farther within the walls of the Long House.”

“What does he mean by the walls of the

Long House ?” asked Lord H—— in a whisper, addressing Edith.

“ Merely the territory of the Five Nations, or Iroquois, as the French call them,” answered his fair companion.

“ I fear not, brother,” replied Mr. Prevost, “ the fire and the iron have not met to make the tomahawk which shall reach my head.”

“ But for the maiden’s sake,” pursued Black Eagle. “ Is she not unto us as a daughter ? Is she not the sister of Otaitsa ? I pray thee, White Pine-tree, let her go with the Eagle and the Blossom into the land of the children of the Stone—but for a few moons—till thy people have triumphed over their enemies, and till the Five Nations have hewed down the tree of the Huron and the Alonquin ; till the war-hatchet is buried, and the pipe of peace is smoked.”

“ ’Twere better, truly, my good friend Prevost,” said Mr. Gore. “ We have seen sights,

to-day, would make the blood of the most bold and hardy man on earth, turn cold and icy to behold, and know he had a daughter near such scenes of death."

"What were they, my good friend?" asked Mr. Prevost. "I have heard of nothing very new or near. The last was the capture of Fort William-Henry, some six weeks since; but as yet we have not heard the whole particulars; and surely, if we are far enough away for the tidings not to reach us in six weeks, it is not likely that hostile armies would approach us very soon."

"Thou art deceived, my brother," answered the Black Eagle. "One short day's journey lies betwixt thee and the battle-field. This morning we crossed it when the sun wanted half an hour of noon, and we are here before he has gone down behind the forest. What we saw chilled the blood of my brother, here, for he has not seen such things before. The

children of the Stone slay not women and children when the battle is over."

"Speak, speak, my good friend, Mr. Gore," said the master of the house; "you know our habits better, and can tell us more of what has happened. Things which are common to his eye must be strange to yours."

"We passed the ground between the one fort and the other," answered the Missionary. "The distance is but seven or eight miles; and, in that short space, lay well nigh a thousand human bodies slain by every dark and terrible means of death. There were young and old; the grey-headed officer; the blooming youth fresh from his mother's side; women, and boys and girls, and little infants snatched from a mother's breast, to die by the hatchet, or the war-club. We heard that the tiger Montcalm, in violation of his given word, in defiance of humanity, Christianity, and the spirit of a gentleman, stood by and saw his

own convention broken, and gallant enemies massacred by his savage allies. But what the chief says is very true, my friend. You are far too near this scene ; and although, perhaps, no regular army could reach this place before you received timely warning, yet the Indian forerunners may be upon you at any moment ; your house may be in flames, and you and your children massacred ere any one could come to give you aid. The troops of our country are far away ; and no force is between you and Horicon, but a small number of our Mohawk brethren : who are not as well pleased with England as they have been."

Mr. Prevost turned his eyes towards Lord H—— ; and the young Englishman replied to Mr. Gore at once, saying, with a quiet inclination of the head :—

" On one point you are mistaken, sir. Lord Loudon has returned, and there is now a strong force at Albany. I passed through that city, lately, and I think that, by the facts which

must have come to his knowledge, General Montcalm will be deterred from pushing his brutal incursions farther this year, at least. Before another morning shines upon us, he may receive some punishment for his faithless cruelty."

"If not here, hereafter," said the Missionary. "There is justice in heaven, sir; and often it visits the evil-doer upon earth. That man's end cannot be happy. But I fear you will not give us aid in persuading your friend here to abandon, for a time, his very dangerous position."

"I know too little of Mr. Prevost's affairs," replied Lord H——, "to advise either for or against. I know still less, too, of the state of the country between this and the French line. Perhaps, in a day or two, I may know more, and then, as a military man myself, I can better tell him what are the real dangers of his situation. At all events, I should like to think over the matter till to-morrow morning, before I offer

an opinion. From what was said just now, I infer that, the Hurons and the French having gone back, there can be no immediate peril."

Mr. Gore shook his head, and the Indian chief remained in profound and somewhat dull silence; seeming not very well pleased at the result of the discussion.

A few minutes after, the evening meal was brought in, and to it the Black Eagle did ample justice; eating like an European with a knife and fork, and displaying no trace of the savage in his demeanor at the table. He remained profoundly silent, however, till the party rose, and then, taking Mr. Prevost by the hand, he said—

"Take counsel of thine own heart, my brother. Think of the flower that grows up by thy side—ask if thou wouldest have it trodden down by the red man's moccassin; and listen not to the Cataract, for it is cold."

Thus saying, he unrolled one of the large

skins, which lay at the side of the room, and stretched himself upon it to take repose.

Edith took Otaita by the hand, saying—
“Come, Blossom: you shall be my companion as before.” Walter, retiring the moment after, left Lord H—— and his host to consult together with Mr. Gore.

CHAPTER IX.

WERE any one inclined to doubt the wonderful harmony which pervades all the works of God, from the very greatest to the very least, he might find a collateral, if not a direct, proof of its existence in the instinctive inclination of the mind of man to discern, in the external world of Nature, figurative resemblances and illustrations of the facts, the events, and the objects of man's moral being and spiritual existence. Not an hour of the day—not a season of the year—not a change in the sky, or on the prospect—not a shade falling over the light, nor a beam penetrating the darkness—but man's imagination seizes upon it to figure

some one or other of the moral phenomena of his nature, and at once perceives and proclaims a harmony between material and immaterial things. The earliest flower of the spring (the shade-loving violet) images to the mind of most men a gentle, sweet, retiring spirit. The blushing rose, in its majesty of bloom, displays the pomp and fragrance of mature beauty. The clouds and the storms give us figures for the sorrows, the cares, and the disasters of life ; and the Spring and the Winter, the dawning and the decline of day, shadow forth to our fancy youth and old age ; while the rising sun pictures our birth into this life of active exertion, effort, toil, glory, and immortality ; and the night, with the new dawn beyond it, the grave, and a life to come.

It was in the old age of the year, then—not the decrepit old age, but the season of vigorous, though declining, maturity ; and in the childhood of the day—not the infancy of dawn, where everything is grey and obscure,

but the clear, dewy childhood, where all is freshness, and elasticity, and balm—that three travellers took their way onward from the house of Mr. Prevost, along a path which led toward the north-east.

Two other persons watched them from the door of the house, and two negro-men and a negro-woman gazed after them from the corner of the building, which joined on to a low fence, encircling the stable and poultry-yard, and running on round the well-cultivated kitchen garden.

The negro-woman shook her head, and looked sorrowful and sighed, but said nothing; the two men talked freely of the imprudence of “master” in suffering his son to go upon such an expedition.

Mr. Prevost and his daughter gazed in silence till the receding figures were hidden by the trees. Then the master of the house led Edith back, saying—

“God will protect him, my child. A parent

was not given to crush the energies of youth, but to direct them."

In the meanwhile, Lord H—— and his guide — Captain Brooks, according to his English name, or Woodchuck in the Indian parlance—followed by Walter Prevost, made their way rapidly, though easily, through the wood. The two former were dressed in the somewhat anomalous attire which I have described in first introducing the worthy captain to the reader; but Walter was in the ordinary costume of the people of the province of that day, except inasmuch as he had his rifle in his hand, and a large leathern wallet slung over his left shoulder; each of his companions, too, had a rifle hung across the back by a broad leathern band; and each was furnished with a hatchet at his girdle, and a long pipe, with a curiously carved stem, in his hand.

Although they were not pursuing any of the public provincial roads, and they were con-

sequently obliged to walk singly, the one following the other, yet Woodchuck, who led the way, had no difficulty in finding it, or in proceeding rapidly.

We are told, by an old writer of those days who, unlike many modern writers, witnessed, with his own eyes, all he described, that the Indian trails, or foot-paths, were innumerable over that large tract of country which the Five Nations called their "Long House," crossing and re-crossing each other in every different direction : sometimes almost lost where the ground was hard and dry : sometimes indenting, by the repeated pressure of many feet, the natural soil to the depth of thirty-six or forty inches.

It was along one of these that the travellers were passing ; and, although a stump here and there, or a young tree springing up in the midst of a trail, offered an occasional impediment, it was rarely of such a nature as to

retard the travellers in their course, or materially add to their fatigues.

With the calm assurance and unhesitating rapidity of a practised woodsman, Brooks led his two companions forward without doubt as to his course. No great light had he, it is true ; for, though the sun was actually above the horizon, and now and then his slanting rays found their way through some more open space, and gilded their pathway, in general the thick trees and underwood formed a shade, which, at that early hour, the light could hardly penetrate ; and the sober morning was still dressed almost in the dark hues of night.

“Set your steps in mine,” said Woodchuck, speaking in a whisper over his shoulder to Lord H—— ; “then we shall be real Ingians. Don’t you know that when they go out on the war-path, as they call it, each man puts down his foot just where his leader put down his before. So, come dog, come cat, no one can

tell how many went to Jack Pilbury's barn."

"But do you think there is any real danger?" asked Lord H——.

"There is always danger in a dark wood and a dark eye," answered Woodchuck, with a laugh; "but no more danger here than in Prevost's cottage of either the one or the other, for you or for Walter. As for me, I am safe anywhere."

"But you are taking strange precautions where there is no danger," observed Lord H——, who could not banish all doubts of his wild companion: "you speak in whispers, and advise us to follow all the cunning devices of the Indians, in a wood which we passed through fearlessly yesterday."

"I am just as fearless now as you war then, if you passed through this wood," answered Brooks, in a graver tone; "but you are not a woodsman, Major, or you'd understand better. We, who, five days out of the seven, are sur-

rounded by enemies, or but half friends—just like a man wrapped up in a porcupine skin—are quite sure that a man's worst enemy and greatest traitor is in himself. So, even when a wise man is quite safe, he puts a guard upon his lips lest that traitor should betray him ; and as for his enemies, knowing there is always one present with him, he takes every care that his everlasting fancy can hit upon, lest more should come suddenly upon him. What I mean, sir, is, that we are so *often* in danger, that we think it best to act as if we were *always* in it ; and, never knowing how near it may be, to make as sure as we can that we keep it at a distance. You cannot tell that there is not an Indian in every bush you pass ; and yet you'd chatter as loud as if you were in my lady's drawing-room. But I, though I know there is ne'er a one, don't speak louder than a grasshopper's hind legs, for fear I should get into the habit of talking loud in the forest."

“ There is some truth, my friend, I believe, in what you say,” returned Lord H—— ; “ but I hear a sound growing louder and louder as we advance. It is the cataract, I suppose.”

“ Yes, just the waterfall,” answered the other, in an indifferent tone. “ Down half a mile below, Master Walter will find the boat that will take him to Albany. Then you and I can snake up by the side of the river till we have gone as fur as we have a mind to. I shouldn’t wonder if we got a shot at somewhat on four, as we run along ; a moose, or a painter, or a look-severe, or something of that kind. Pity we havn’t got a canoe, or a batteau, or something to put our game in.”

“ In Heaven’s name, what do you call a look-severe ?” asked Lord H——.

“ Why, the French folks call it a *loup-cervier*,” answered Brooks. “ I guess you never saw one. But he is not as pleasant as a pretty maid in a by-place—is he, Master Walter ? He puts himself up into a tree, and there

he watches, looking fast asleep, but with the devil that is in him moving every joint of his tail the moment he hears anything come trotting along; and when it is just under him, down he drops upon it plump, like a rifle-shot into a pumpkin."

The conversation then fell off into a word or two spoken now and then; and still the voice of the waters grew louder and more loud, till Lord H—— could hardly hear his own foot-falls. The more practised ear of Brooks, however, caught every sound; and at length he exclaimed:—

"What's alive? Why are you cocking your rifle, Walter?"

"Hush!" said the lad; "there is something stealing in there behind the laurels. It is an Indian, I think, going on all fours. Look quietly out there."

"More likely a *beear*," replied Woodchuck, in the same low tone which the other had used — "I see, I see. It's not a *beear* either; but

it's not an Ingian. It's gone—no, there it is agin. Hold hard! —let him climb. It's a painter. Here, Walter, come up in front—you shall have him. The cur smells fresh meat. He'll climb in a minute. There he goes. No, the crittur's on again. We shall lose him if we don't mind.—Quick, Walter! spread out there to the right. I will take the left, and we shall drive him to the water, where he must climb. You, Major, keep right on a head—mind take the middle trail all along, and look up at the branches, or you may have him on your head. There, he's a bending south. Quick, Walter, quick!”

Lord H—— had as yet seen nothing of the object discovered by the eyes of his two companions; but he had sufficient of the sportsman in his nature to enter into all their eagerness; and, unslinging his rifle, he followed the path, or trail, along which they had been proceeding, while Walter Prevost darted away into the tangled bushes on the right, and Woodchuck

stole more quietly in amongst the trees on his left. He could hear the branches rustle, and, for nearly a quarter of a mile, could trace their course on either side of him by the various little signs of now a waving branch, now a slight sound. Once, and only once, he thought he saw the panther cross the trail, but it was at a spot peculiarly dark, and he did not feel at all sure that fancy had not deceived him.

The roar of the cataract in the meantime increased each moment; and it was evident to the young nobleman that he and his companions on their different courses were approaching close and more closely to some large stream towards which it was the plan of good Captain Brooks to force the object of their pursuit. At length, too, the light became stronger, and the blue sky and sunshine could be seen through the tops of the trees in front, when suddenly, on the right, he heard the report of a rifle, and then a fierce snarling sound, with a shout from Walter Prevost.

Knowing how dangerous the wounded panther is, the young officer, without hesitation, darted away into the brush to aid Edith's brother ; for, by this time, it was in that light that he generally thought of him ; and the lad soon heard his approach, and guided him up by the voice, calling—" Here, here !" There was no alarm or agitation in his tones, which were rather those of triumph ; and, a moment after, as he caught sight of his friend's coming form, he added—" He's a splendid beast. I must have the skin off him."

Lord H—— drew nigh, somewhat relaxing his speed, when he found there was no danger, and in another minute he was by the side of the lad who was just quietly re-charging his rifle, while at some six or seven yards' distance lay a large panther of the American species, mortally wounded, and quite powerless for evil, but not yet quite dead.

" Keep away from him—keep away," cried Walter, as the young nobleman approached.

"They sometimes tear one terribly even at the last gasp."

"Why, he is nearly as big as a tiger," said Lord H——.

"He is a splendid fellow," answered Walter, joyfully. "One might live a hundred years in England without finding such game."

Lord H—— smiled, and remained for a moment or two, till the young man's rifle was reloaded, gazing at the beast in silence.

Suddenly, however, they both heard the sound of another rifle on the left, and Walter, exclaimed—

"Woodchuck has got one too."

But the report was followed by a yell very different from the snarl or growl of a wounded beast.

"That's no panther's cry," exclaimed Walter Prevost, his cheek turning somewhat pale; "what can have happened?"

"It was a human utterance," said Lord H——, listening; "like that of some one in sud-

den agony. I trust our friend, the Woodchuck, has not shot himself by accident."

"It is not a white man's cry," said Walter, bending his ear in the direction from which had come the sounds. But all was still; and the young man raised his voice, and shouted to their companion.

No answer was returned; and Lord H——, exclaiming, "We had better seek him at once, he may need help," darted away towards the spot whence his ear told him the shot had come.

"A little more to the right my Lord, a little more to the right," said Walter; "you will hit on a trail in a minute." Then, raising his voice again, he shouted "Woodchuck! Woodchuck!" with evident alarm and distress.

He was right in the supposition that they should soon find some path, for they struck an Indian trail, crossing that on which they had been previously proceeding, and leading in the direction in which they wished to go. Both then hurried on with greater rapidity, Walter.

running rather than walking, and Lord H—— following, with his cocked rifle in his hand.

They had not far to go, however; for the trail soon opened upon a small piece of grassy savanna, lying close upon the river's edge; and in the midst of it they beheld a sight which was terrible enough in itself, but which afforded less apprehension and grief to the mind of Lord H—— than to that of Walter Prevost, who was better acquainted with the Indian habits and character.

About ten yards from the mouth of the path appeared the powerful form of Captain Brooks, with his folded arms leaning on the muzzle of his discharged rifle. He was as motionless as a statue; his brow contracted; his brown cheek very pale, and his eyes bent forward upon an object lying upon the grass before him. It was the body of an Indian weltering in his blood. The dead man's head was bare of all covering, except the scalp-lock. He was painted with the war colors; and in his hand, as

he lay, he still grasped the tomahawk, as if it had been raised in the act to strike, the moment before he fell.

To the eyes of Lord H——, his tribe or nation was an undiscovered secret ; but certain small signs and marks in his garb, and even in his features, showed Walter Prevost at once that he was not only one of the Five Nations, but an Oneida.

The full and terrible importance of the fact will be seen by what followed.

CHAPTER X.

FOR a few minutes, the three living men stood silent in the presence of the dead ; and, then Walter exclaimed, in a tone of deep grief, " Alas, Woodchuck, what have you done ?"

" Saved my scalp," answered Brooks, sternly ; and fell into silence again.

There was another long pause ; at last, Lord H——, mistaking in some degree the causes of the man's strong emotion, laid his hand upon the hunter's arm, saying, " Come away, my friend ! Why should you linger here ?"

" It's no use," answered Woodchuck, gloomily ; " he had a woman with him, and it

will soon be known all through the tribe."

"But for your own safety," said Walter, "you had better fly. It is very sad indeed. What could make him attack you?"

"An old grudge, Master Walter," answered Brooks, seating himself deliberately on the ground, and laying his rifle across his knee. "I knew the crittur well—the Striped Snake they called him, and a snake he was. He tried to cheat and rob me, and I made it plain to the whole tribe. Some laughed and thought it fair; but old Black Eagle scorned and rebuked him, and he has hated me ever since. He has been long watching for this, and now he has got it."

"Well, well," returned Walter, "what's done cannot be undone. You had better get away as fast as you can; for Black Eagle told me he had left three scouts behind, to bring us tidings in case of danger, and we cannot tell how near the others may be."

“This was one of them,” answered Brooks, still keeping his seat, and gazing at the Indian ; “but what is safety to me, Walter? I can no more roam the forests ; I can no more pursue my way of life ; I must go into dull and smoky cities, and plod amongst thieving, cheating crowds of white men. The rifle and the hatchet must be laid aside for ever ; the forest grass must know my foot no more. Flowers, and green leaves, and rushing streams, and the broad lake, and the mountain top, are lost and gone—the watch under the deep boughs, and by the silent water. Close pressed amidst the toiling herd, I shall become sordid, and low, and filthy, as they are ; my free nature lost, and gyves upon my spirit. All life’s blessings are gone from me ; why should I care for life?”

There was something unusually plaintive, mournful, and earnest in his tones, and Lord H—— could not help feeling for him, although he did not comprehend fully the occasion of his grief.

“But, my good friend,” he said, “I cannot

perceive how your having slain this Indian, in your own defence, can bring such a train of miseries upon you. You would not have killed him, if he had not attacked you."

"Alas for me! alas for me!" was all the answer that the poor man made.

"You do not know their habits, sir," said Walter, in a low voice; "they must always have blood for blood. If he stays here, if he ever returns, go where he will in the Indian territory, they will track him, they will follow him day and night. He will be amongst them like one of the wild beasts whom we so eagerly pursue from place to place, with the hatchet always hanging over his head. There is no safety for him, except far away in the provinces beyond those towns that Indians ever visit. Do persuade him to come away and leave the body. He can go down with me to Albany, and thence make his way to New York or Philadelphia."

For some minutes Brooks remained deaf to

all arguments; his whole thoughts seemed occupied with the terrible conviction that the wild scenes and free life which he enjoyed so intensely, were, with him, at an end for ever.

Suddenly, however, when Lord H—— was just about to abandon, in despair, the task of persuading him, he started up as if some new thought struck him; and, gazing first at Walter and then at the young officer, he exclaimed—

“But I am keeping you here, and you too may be murdered. The death-spot is upon me, and it will spread to all around. I am ready to go. I will bear my fate as I can, but it is very, very hard. Come, let us be gone quick. Stay, I will charge my rifle first. Who knows how soon we may need it for more such bloody work?”

All his energy seemed to have returned in a moment, and it deserted him not again. He charged his rifle with wonderful rapidity, tossed it under his arm, and took a step as if to go. Then for a moment he paused, and, advancing

close to the dead Indian, gazed at him sternly.

“Oh, my enemy!” he cried, “thou saidst thou wouldst have revenge, and thou hast had it, far more bitter than if thy hatchet had entered into my skull, and I were lying there in thy place.”

Turning round as soon as he had spoken, he led the way back along the trail, murmuring, rather to himself than to his companions—

“The instinct of self-preservation is very strong. But better for me had I let him slay me. I know not how I was fool enough to fire. Come, Walter, we must get round the falls where we shall find some batteaux that will carry us down.”

He walked along for about five minutes in silence; and then suddenly looked around to Lord H——, exclaiming—

“But what’s to become of him? How is he to find his way back again? Come, I will go back with him; it matters not if they do catch

me and scalp me. I do not like to be dogged and tracked and followed, and taken unawares. But I can only die at last. I will go back with him as soon as you are in the boat, Walter."

"No, no, Woodchuck, that will not do," returned the lad; "you forget that if they found you with him, they would kill him too. I will tell you how we will manage it. Let him come down with us to the point; then there is a straight road up to the house, and we can get one of the batteaux-men to go with him and show him the way, unless he likes to go on with me to Albany."

"I cannot do that," replied Lord H——, "for I promised to be back at your father's house by to-morrow night, and matters of much importance may have to be decided. But I can easily land at the point, as you say—whatever point you may mean—and find my way back. As for myself, I have no fears. There seem to be but a few scattered parties of

Indians of different tribes roaming about, and I trust that anything like general hostility is at an end for this year at least."

"In Indian warfare, the danger is the greatest, I have heard, when it seems the least," observed Walter Prevost; "but from the point to the house, some fourteen or sixteen miles, the road is generally safe, for it is the only one on which large numbers of persons are passing to and from Albany."

"It will be safe enough," said Woodchuck; "that way is always quiet, and, besides, a wise man and a peaceful one could travel at any time from one end of the Long House to the other without risk—unless there were special cause. It is bad shooting we have had to day, Walter; but still I should have liked to have the skin of that painter; he seemed to me an unextinguishable fine crittur."

"He was a fine creature, and that I know, for I shot him, Woodchuck," said Walter

Prevost, with some pride in the achievement. "I wanted to send the skin to Otaita ; but it cannot be helped."

"Let us go and get it now," cried Woodchuck, with the ruling passion strong in death ; "'tis but a step back. Darn those Ingians ! Why should we care ?"

But both his companions urged him forward ; and they continued their way through the woods skirting the river, for somewhat more than two miles, first rising gently to a spot where the roar of the waters was heard distinctly, and then descending to a rocky point, midway between the highest ground and the water level, where a small congregation of huts had been gathered together, principally inhabited by boatmen, and surrounded by a stout palisade. One of the most necessary parts of prudence in any body of settlers, was to choose such a site for their dwelling-place as would command a clear view of an approaching stranger, whether well or ill disposed ; and the

ground round this little hamlet had been cleared on all sides of every tree and shrub that could conceal a rabbit. Thus situated on the top of the eminence nearest to the water, it possessed an almost panoramic view, hardly to be surpassed in the world.

That view, however, had one principal object. On the left, at about four hundred yards' distance, the river of which I have spoken came thundering over a precipice of about three hundred feet in height. Whether worn by the constant action of the waters, or cast into that shape by some strange geological phenomenon, the rock over which the torrent poured had assumed the form of a great amphitheatre, scooped out, as it were, in the very bed of the river, which, flowing on in a mighty stream, fell over the edge at various points; sometimes in an immense green mass, sometimes in a broad and silvery sheet, sometimes in a dazzling line of sparkling foam; all the streams meeting about half way down, and

thundering and boiling in a dark abyss, which the eye from above could hardly fathom. Jutting masses of grey rock protruded themselves in strange fantastic shape about, around, and below, the chasm; and upon these, wherever a root could cling, or a particle of vegetable earth could rest, a tree, a shrub, a flower, or had perched itself. The green boughs waved amidst the spray; the dark hemlock contrasted itself, in its stern grandeur, with the white, agitated waters; and the birch and the ash with their waving branches seemed to sport with the eddies as they leapt along.

At the foot of the precipice was a deep, whirling pool, unseen, however, from the spot where the travellers stood; and from this issued, first narrow and confined, but then spreading out gradually, between the decreasing banks, a wide and beautiful river, which, by the time it circled the point in front of the travellers, had become as calm and glossy as a looking-glass, reflecting for their eyes the

blue sky, and the majestic clouds which were now moving slowly over it.

The bend taken by the river shaped the hilly point of ground on which the travellers stood into a small peninsula, about the middle of the neck of which was the boatman's little hamlet which I have mentioned ; and nearly at the same distance as the falls from the huts, though more than a mile and a half by the course of the stream, was a piece of broad, sandy shore, on which the woodman had drawn up ten or twelve boats, used sometimes for the purposes of fishing, sometimes for the carriage of peltries to the towns lower down, and goods and passengers returning.

Thence onward, the course of the river could be traced for eight or ten miles, flowing through a gently undulating country, densely covered with forest, while to the east and north rose up some fine blue mountains, at the distance, probably, of thirty miles.

The scene at the hamlet itself had nothing

very remarkable in it. There were women sitting at the door, knitting and sewing; men lounging about, or mending nets, or making lines; children playing in the dirt, as usual, both inside and outside the palisade. The traces of more than one nation could be discovered in the features, as well as on the tongues, of the inhabitants; and it was not difficult to perceive, that here had been congregated, by the force of circumstances, into which it is not necessary to inquire, sundry fragments of Dutch, English, Indian, and even French, races, all bound together by a community of object and pursuit.

The approach of the three strangers did not in any degree startle the good people from their idleness or their occupations. The carrying trade was then a very good one, especially in remote places where travelling was difficult; and these people could always make a tolerable livelihood, without any very great or continuous exertion. The result of such a state of things

is always very detrimental to activity of mind or body ; and the boatmen, though they sauntered round Lord H—— and his companions, divining that some profitable piece of work was before them, showed amazing indifference as to whether they would undertake it, or not.

But that which astonished Lord H—— the most, was to see the deliberate coolness with which Woodchuck set about making his bargain for the conveyance of himself and Walter to Albany. He sat down upon a large stone within the inclosure, took a knife from his pocket, a piece of wood from the ground, and began cutting the latter into small splinters, with as tranquil and careless an air as if there were no heavy thought upon his mind, no dark memory behind him, no terrible fate dogging him at the heels.

But Woodchuck and Walter were both well known to the boatmen ; and, though they might

probably have attempted to impose upon the inexperience of the lad, they knew they had met their match in the shrewdness of his companion, and were not aware that any circumstance rendered speed more valuable to him than money.

The bargain then was soon concluded; but Captain Brooks was not contented till he had stipulated also for the services of two men in guiding Lord H—— back to the house of Mr. Prevost. This was undertaken for a dollar a-piece; and then the whole party proceeded to the bank of the river, where a boat was soon unmoored, and Walter and his companion set forth upon their journey: not, however, until Lord H—— had shaken the former warmly by the hand, and said a few words in the ear of Captain Brooks, adding:—

“Walter will tell you more, and how to communicate with me.”

“Thank you, thank you,” replied the hunter, wringing his hand hard. “A friend in need

is a friend indeed : I do not want it, but I thank you as much as if I did. But you shall hear if I do, for somehow I guess you are not the man to say what you don't mean."

After seeing his two companions row down the stream for a few yards, the nobleman turned to the boatmen who accompanied him, saying :—

" Now, my lads, I want to make a change of our arrangements, and to go back the short way by which we came. I did not interrupt our good friend Woodchuck, because he was anxious about my safety. There are some Indians in the forest ; and he feared I might get scalped. However, we shot a panther there, which we couldn't stay to skin, as their business in Albany was pressing. Now, I want the skin, and am not afraid of the Indians—are you ?"

The men laughed, and replied in the negative, saying that there were none of the red men there, except four or five Oneidas, and some

Mohawks ; but they added that the way, though shorter, was much more difficult and bushy, and, therefore, they must have more pay. Lord H—— was less difficult to deal with than Captain Brooks, and the bargain was soon struck.

Each of the men then armed himself with a rifle and took a bag of parched corn with him, and the three set out. Lord H—— undertook to guide them to the spot where the panther lay ; and not a little did they marvel at the accuracy and precision with which his military habits of observation enabled him to direct them step by step. He took great care not to let them approach the spot where the Indian had been slain, but, stopping about a quarter of a mile to the south, led them across the thicket to within a very few yards of the object he was in search of. It was soon found when they came near the place, and about half an hour was employed in taking off the skin, and packing it up for carriage.

“Now,” said Lord H——, “will you two undertake to have this skin properly cured, and dispatched by the first trader going west to the Oneida village?”

The men readily agreed to do so, if well paid for it, but of course required farther directions, saying there were a dozen or more Oneida villages.

“It will be sure to reach its destination,” said Lord H——, “if you tell the bearer to deliver it to Otaitsa, which I believe means the Blossom, the daughter of Black Eagle, the Sachem. Say that it comes from Walter Prevost.”

“Oh ay,” answered the boatmen, “it shall be done; but we shall have to pay the man who carries it.”

The arrangement in regard to payment was soon made, though it was somewhat exorbitant; but, to insure that the commission was faithfully executed, Lord H—— reserved a portion of the money, to be given when he heard that

the skin had been delivered. He little knew the consequences which were to flow from the little act of kindness he was performing.

The rest of the journey passed without interruption or difficulty, and at an early hour of the evening the young nobleman stood once more at the door of his countryman's house.

CHAPTER XI.

THE return of Lord H——, without his guide and companion, Captain Brooks, caused some surprise in Mr. Prevost and his daughter, who had not expected to see any of the party before a late hour of the following evening.

Not choosing to explain, in the presence of Edith, the cause of his parting so suddenly from the hunter, the young nobleman merely said that circumstances had led him to conclude that it would be advisable to send Woodchuck in the boat with Walter to Albany; and his words were uttered in so natural and easy a tone, that Edith, unconscious that her presence put any restraint upon his communica-

tion with her father, remained seated in their pleasant little parlor till the hour for the evening meal.

“Well, my Lord,” said Mr. Prevost, after the few first words of explanation had passed, “did you meet with any fresh specimen of the Indian in your short expedition?”

The question might have been a somewhat puzzling one for a man who did not want to enter into any particulars; but Lord H—— replied with easy readiness—

“Only one. Him we saw but for a moment, and he did not speak with us.”

“They are a very curious race,” observed Mr. Prevost, “and, albeit not very much given to ethnological studies, I have often puzzled myself as to whence they sprang, and how they made their way over to this continent.”

Lord H—— smiled.

“I fear I cannot help you,” he said. “My profession, you know, my dear sir, leads one much more to look at things as they are than to inquire

how they came about. It strikes me, at once, however, that in mere corporeal characteristics the Indian is very different from any race I ever beheld, if I may judge by the few individuals I have seen. The features are very different from those of any European or Asiatic people that I know of, and the frame seems formed for a combination of grace and power, almost perfect. Our friend, the Black Eagle, for instance : compare him with a Yorkshire or Somersetshire farmer, and what a contrast you would find ! Habits could not have produced the difference ; at least, if they sprang from an Eastern stock, for the tribes of the desert are as free and unrestrained, as much used to constant exercise and activity ; but I should be inclined to fancy that climate may have something to do with the matter, for it has struck me that many of the people I have seen in the provinces have what I may call a tendency toward the Indian formation. There

is a length and suppleness of limb, which to my eyes has something Indian about it."

"Bating the grace and dignity," said Edith, gaily, "I do think that what my father would call the finest specimens of the human animal are to be found among the Indians. Look at our dear little Otaitsa, for instance, can any thing be more beautiful, more graceful, more perfect, than her whole face and form?"

Lord H—— smiled, and slightly bowed his head, saying—

"Now, many a fair lady, Miss Prevost, would naturally expect a very gallant reply; and I might make another without a compliment in good cool blood, and upon calm, mature consideration. I am very poorly versed, however, in civil speeches, and therefore I will only say that I think I have seen white ladies as beautiful, as graceful, and as perfect, as your fair young friend, together with the advantage of a better complexion. But, at the same time,

I will admit that she is exceedingly beautiful, and not only that, but very charming, and very interesting too. Hers is not exactly the style of beauty I admire the most ; but certainly it is perfect in its kind, and my young friend Walter seems to think so too."

A slight flush passed over Edith's cheek, and her eyes instantly turned towards her father. But Mr. Prevost only laughed, saying—

"If they were not so young, I should be afraid that my son would marry the Sachem's daughter, and, perhaps, in the end, take to the tomahawk and the scalping-knife. But, joking apart, Otaitsa is a very singular little creature. I never can bring myself to feel that she is an Indian—a savage, in short. When I hear her low, melodious voice, with its peculiar song-like intonation, and see the grace and dignity with which she moves, and the ease and propriety with which she adapts herself to every European custom, I have to look at her bead-embroidered petticoat, and her leggins, and her

moccassins, before I can carry it home to my mind that she is not some very high-bred lady of the court of France or England. Then she is so fair, too ; but that is probably from care, and the lack of that exposure to the sun which may, at first, have given and then perpetuated the Indian tint. To use an old homely expression, she is the apple of her father's eye, and he is as careful of her as of a jewel, after his own particular fashion."

"She is a dear creature," said Edith, warmly; "all soul, and heart, and feeling. Thank God, too, she is a Christian, and you cannot fancy, my Lord, what marvellous stores of information the little creature has. She knows that England is an island in the middle of the salt sea ; and she can write and read our tongue nearly as well as she speaks it. She has a holy hatred of the French, however ; and would not, for the world, speak a word of their language ; for all her information, and a good share of her ideas, come from our friend, Mr. Gore, who has

carried John Bull completely into the heart of the wilderness, and kept him there perfect in a sort of crystallized state. Had we but a few more men such as himself amongst the Indian tribes, there would be no fear of any wavering in the friendship of the Five Nations. There goes an Indian now past the window. We shall have him in here in a moment, for they stand upon no ceremony—and he is speaking to Antony, the negro-boy. How curiously he peeps about him! He must be looking for somebody he does not find.”

Lord H—— rose and went to the window, and, in a minute or two after, the Indian stalked quietly away, and disappeared in the forest.

“What could he want?” said Edith. “It is strange he did not come in. I will ask Antony what he sought here.”

And, going to the door, she called the gardener boy up, and questioned him.

“He want Captain Woodchuck, Missy,” re-

plied the lad. "He ask if he not lodge here last night. I tell him yes; but Woodchuck go away early this morning, and not come back since. He 'quire very much about him, and who went with him. I tell him Massa Walter and de strange gentleman, but both leave him soon—Massa Walter go straight to Albany, strange gentleman come back here."

"Did he speak English?" asked Edith.

"Few word," replied the negro. "I speak few word Indian. So patch 'em together make many, missy."

And he laughed with that peculiar unmeaning laugh with which his race are accustomed to distinguish anything they consider witty.

The whole conversation was heard by the two gentlemen within. On Mr. Prevost it had no effect, but to call a sort of cynical smile upon his lips; but the case was different with Lord H——. He saw that the deed which had been done in the forest was known to the Indians; that its doer had been recognized,

and that the hunt was up ; and he rejoiced to think that poor Woodchuck was already far beyond pursuit.

Anxious, however, to gain a fuller insight into the character and habits of a people of whom he had as yet obtained only a glimpse, he continued to converse with Mr. Prevost in regard to the aboriginal races, and learned several facts which by no means tended to decrease the uneasiness which the events of the morning had produced.

“The Indians,” said his host, in answer to a leading question, “are, as you say, a very revengeful people ; but not more so than many other barbarous nations. Indeed, in many of their feelings and habits they greatly resemble a people I have heard of in central Asia called Afghans. Both, in common with almost all barbarians, look upon revenge as a duty imperative upon every family and every tribe. They modify their ideas, indeed, in case of war ; although it is very difficult to bring

about peace after war has commenced ; but if any individual of a tribe is killed by another in time of peace, nothing but the blood of the murderer can satisfy the family or the tribe, if he can be caught. They will pursue him for weeks and months, and employ every stratagem which their fertile brains can suggest to entrap him, till they feel quite certain that he is entirely beyond their reach. This perseverance proceeds from a religious feeling, for they believe that the spirit of their dead relation can never enter the happy hunting-grounds till his blood has been atoned by that of the slayer."

"But if they cannot catch the slayer," asked Lord H——, "what do they do then?"

"I used a wrong expression," replied Mr. Prevost. "I should have said the blood of some other victim. It is their duty, according to their ideas, to sacrifice the slayer. If satisfied that he is perfectly beyond their power, they strive to get hold of his nearest relation. If they cannot do that, they take a man of his

tribe or nation, and sacrifice him. It is all done very formally, and with all sorts of consideration and consultation ; for in these bloody rites they are the most deliberate people in the world, and the most persevering also."

Lord H—— mused gravely for some moments without reply ; and then turned the conversation in another direction. It certainly was not gay ; but it was, to all appearance, cheerful enough on his side ; for this world is a strange teacher of hypocrisy in all its various shades, from that which is the meanest and most detestable of vices to that which is dignified by its motives and its conduct almost to a virtue. God forbid that I should ever, for a moment, support the false and foul axiom that the end can justify the means. But it is with all evil things as with deadly poisons. There are occasions when, in small portions, they may, for certain diseased circumstances, become precious antidotes. Had man remained pure, perfect, and upright, as he came from the

hands of his Creator—had he never doubted God's word, disobeyed his commandments, tasted of that which was forbidden—had disobedience never brought pain and death—had blood never stained the face of earth, and pain in all its shapes followed in the footsteps of sin—there would, indeed, have never been any occasion or any circumstances in which it would have been needful, honorable, or kind for man to hide one feeling of his heart from his fellow beings. But in this dark, corrupted world, where sickness and sorrow, care, distress, and death, surround, not only ourselves, but those who are dearest to us, and hem us in on every side, how often is it needful to hide from those, even whom we love the best, and trust the most, the anxieties which imagination suggests, or to which reason and experience give birth ; to conceal, for a time, even the sad and painful facts of which we are cognizant ; to shut up our sorrow and our dread in our own bosom, till we have armed and steeled the hearts of

those we love better than ourselves, to resist or to endure the evil which is preying on our own.

A few days earlier, Lord H—— might plainly and openly have told all the occurrences of the morning in the ears of Edith Prevost; but sensations had been springing up in his breast, which made him more tender of her feelings, more careful of creating alarm and anxiety; and he kept his painful secret well till after the evening-meal was over, and she had retired to her chamber. Then, however, he stopped Mr. Prevost just as that gentleman was raising a light to hand to his guest, and said—

“I am afraid, my good friend, we cannot go to bed just yet. I have something to tell you, which, from all I have heard since it occurred, appears to me of much greater importance than at first. Whether anything can be done to avert the evil consequences or not,

I cannot tell ; but, at all events, it is as well that you and I should talk the matter over."

He then related to Mr. Prevost all the events of the morning, and was sorry to perceive that gentleman's face assuming a deeper and deeper gloom as he proceeded.

"This is most unfortunate indeed," said Mr. Prevost, at length. "I quite acquit our poor friend Brooks of any evil intent ; but to slay an Indian at all so near our house, and especially an Oneida, was most unlucky. That tribe, or nation, as they call themselves, has, from the strong personal regard, I suppose, which has grown up accidentally between their chief and myself, always shown the greatest kindness and friendship towards myself and my family. Before this event, I should have felt myself, in any of their villages, as much at home as by my own fire-side, and I am sure that each man felt himself as secure on any part of the lands granted to me, as if he were in his own lodge.

But now, their blood has stained my very mat, as they will call it, and the consequences no one can foresee. Woodchuck has himself escaped. He has no relations or friends on whom they can wreak their vengeance."

"Surely," exclaimed Lord H——, "they will never visit his offence on you or yours."

"I trust not," replied Mr. Prevost, after a moment's thought; "yet I cannot feel exactly sure. They will take a white man for their victim—an Englishman—one of the same nation as the offender. Probably it may not matter much to them who it is; and the affectionate regard which they entertain towards us may turn the evil aside. But these Indians have a sort of fanaticism in their religion, as well as we have in ours; the station and the dignity of the victim which they offer up enters into their consideration—they like to make a worthy and an honorable sacrifice, as they consider it; and, just as this spirit moves them or not, they may think that any one will

do for their purpose, or that they are required by their God of vengeance to immolate some one dear to themselves, in order to dignify the sacrifice."

"This is, indeed, a very sad view of the affair, and one which had never struck me," replied Lord H——. "It may be well to consider, my dear sir, what is the best and safest course. I must now tell you one of the objects which made me engage your son to carry my dispatches to Albany. It seemed to me, from all I have learned during my short residence with you, especially during my conference with Sir William Johnson, that the unprotected state of this part of the country left Albany itself, and the settlements round it, unpleasantly exposed. We know that on a late occasion it was Dieskau's intention, if he had succeeded in defeating Sir William, and capturing Fort George, to make a dash at the capital of the province. He was defeated; but there is reason to believe that Montcalm—

a man much his superior, both in energy and skill—entertained the same views, although we know not what induced him to retreat so hastily after his black and bloody triumph at Fort William Henry. He may seize some other opportunity ; and I can perceive nothing whatsoever to oppose his progress, or delay him for an hour, if he can make himself master of the few scattered forts which lie between Carrillon or Ticonderoga. In these circumstances, I have strongly urged that a small force should be thrown forward to a commanding point on the river Hudson, not many miles from this place, which I examined as I came hither—with an advanced post or two, still nearer to your house. My own regiment I have pointed out as better fitted for the service than any other ; and I believe that if my suggestions are adopted, as I doubt not they will be, we can give you efficient protection. Still I think,” continued the nobleman, speaking more slowly and emphatically, “ that, with two young

people so justly dear to you ; with a daughter so beautiful, and every way so charming ; and so gallant and noble a lad as Walter, whose high spirit and adventurous character will expose him continually to any snare that may be set for him, it will be much better for you to retire with them both to Albany ; at least till such time as you know that the spirit of Indian vengeance has been satisfied, and that the real peril has passed."

Mr. Prevost mused for several minutes ; and then replied—

"The motives you suggest are certainly very strong, my Lord ; but I have strange ways of viewing such subjects, and I must have time to consider whether it is fair and right to my fellow countrymen, scattered over this district, to withdraw from my share of the peril which all who remain would have to encounter.—Do not argue with me upon the subject to-night. I will think over it well ; and doubt not that I shall view the plan you have

suggested with all the favor that paternal love can afford. I will also keep my mind free to receive any further reasons you may have to produce. But I must first consider quietly and alone. There is no need of immediate decision; for these people, according to their own code, are bound to make themselves perfectly sure that they cannot get possession of the actual slayer, before they choose another victim. It is clear from what the Indian said to the negro boy, that they know the hand that did the deed, and they must search for poor Brooks first, and practise every device to allure him back before they immolate another. Let us both think over the matter well, and confer to-morrow."

Thus saying, he shook hands with Lord H——; and they retired to their several chambers with very gloomy and apprehensive thoughts.

CHAPTER XII.

THERE are hours in the life of man when no actual grief oppresses him—when there is no imminent peril near—when no strong passion wrings his heart; and yet those hours are amongst the most dark and painful of his whole existence. They come on many occasions, and under various circumstances—often when some silent voice from within warns him of the instability of all human joy, and a grey shadow takes the place of the sunshine of life—often when the prophetic soul, seeing in the distant horizon a cloud no bigger than a man's hand, foretels the hurricane and

the tempest that is to sweep away his brightest hopes for ever.

Such hours were those of Mr. Prevost during a great part of the night which succeeded his parting with Lord H——. He slept but little for several hours, and, though he knew not why, a gloomy, oppressive fancy seized upon him, that his household would be the one to suffer from the event which had lately passed.

The want of sleep in the earlier part of the night protracted the slumbers of the morning. He was usually the first person up in the house, and enjoyed many an hour of study or of thought before even the negroes were stirring. But this morning he was aroused by a distant knocking at the huts where the outdoor servants slept, and then by a repetition of the same sound at the door of the house itself.

Rising hastily, he got down in time to see the door opened by old Agrippa, and found a man on horseback bearing a large, official-

looking letter, addressed to Major-General Lord H——.

It proved to be a dispatch from Sir William Johnson, requesting both Lord H—— and Mr. Prevost to attend a meeting of some of the chiefs of the Five Nations, which was to be held at Johnson Castle on the Mohawk in the course of the following day. Though the distance was not very great, the difficulty of travelling through that part of the country made it necessary to set out at once in order to reach the place of rendezvous before night.

“I will mount my horse as soon as it can be got ready,” said Lord H——, when he had read the letter, and shown it to Mr. Prevost. “I suppose, in existing circumstances, you will not think it advisable to accompany me?”

“Most certainly I will go with you, my Lord,” replied his host. “As I said last night, the danger, though very certain, is not immediate. Weeks, months, may pass before these Indians feel assured that they cannot ob-

tain possession of the actual slayer of their red brother; and, as many of the Oneidas will probably be present at this 'talk,' as they call it. I may, perhaps, (though it is very doubtful), gain some insight into their thoughts and intentions. I will take my daughter with me, however, for I should not like to leave her here altogether alone. Her preparations may delay us for half-an-hour; but we shall have ample time; and the horse of the messenger who will act as our guide, must have some little time to take rest and feed."

Edith was all gaiety and satisfaction at the thought of the expedition before her. She knew many of the Indians well; was acquainted with their habits and manners, and was a great favorite with several of the chiefs; but she had never been present at any of their great meetings, and the event before her had all the recommendation of novelty. The keen observer before whom she stood, drew from her active eagerness an inference, partially

true, though carried, perhaps, a little too far, that she was not in reality well satisfied with her residence in the wilderness—that it was oppressive to her, and that, though she might studiously conceal her distaste for such solitude, she was very glad to seize an opportunity of escaping from it to busier scenes.

However that might be, she was ready the first. A very brief time was spent at breakfast, and then the whole party set out on horseback, followed by a negro leading a pack-horse, and preceded by the messenger of Sir William Johnson.

It was customary in those days in all lands for every gentleman to go armed with the sword at least ; and, in those parts of America which bordered upon the Indian territory, few people thought of going forth for any distance without a rifle as a protection, not alone against any hostile natives, but against wild beasts which were then somewhat numerous. Mr. Prevost, the messenger, and the negro, were all

thus armed ; but Lord H—— who had hitherto worn nothing but the common riding-suit in which he had first presented himself, except in his unfortunate expedition with Captain Brooks, had now donned the splendid uniform of a Major-General in the British service, and was merely armed with his sword and pistols in the holsters of his saddle.

Thus equipped, and mounted on a horse full of life and spirit, from a four days' rest, he was certainly as gallant looking a cavalier as ever presented himself to lady's eyes. But, to say sooth, his military station and his military dress were no great recommendation to Edith ; for it is sad to say, but too true, that officers in the English army in those days had made themselves anything but popular or well esteemed in the American provinces. A more simple and more virtuous state of society certainly existed in the northern portion of the New World, than in any part of the Old ; and, coming from a luxurious and

vicious scene to a completely different state of things, the English officer, despising the simpler habits of the people, displayed no slight portion of insolence and presumption, and carried to excess the evil habits which should have been disgraceful in any country. A great change has since come over his manners and character in almost every respect; but at that period he was notorious in the colonies for blasphemy, drunkenness, and depraved morals.

Thus, to be a military man was, as I have said, no great recommendation in the eyes of any lady who possessed self-respect, but in the case of Lord H—— it served to heighten the good qualities which were apparent in him, by showing him in a favourable contrast to the great body of his comrades. He swore not; in eating and drinking he carried moderation to abstemiousness; and in manners, though firm, easy, and self-possessed, there was not the slightest touch of overbearingness or presumption. Occasionally his tone was grave,

almost to sternness ; but at other times it was mild, and even tender ; and there was something peculiarly gentle as well as bright in his smile, and in his eyes.

The journey passed without incident. Deep woods succeeded each other for many miles, but not without interruption. Every now and then a bright stream would come dancing along in its autumnal freshness ; and then the road would circle the edge of a small lake, sweet, and calm, and beautiful, reflecting the blue sky and the over-hanging branches of the pine and hemlock. At places where the maple grew, the forest would be all in a glow, as if with the reflection of some vast unseen fire ; and then again, where the road passed through a deep valley, all would be dark and sombre and gloomy.

No Indian villages were passed, and not a human being was seen for seventeen or eighteen miles ; though here and there a small log-hut, apparently deserted, testified to

the efforts of a new race to wrest their hunting-grounds from an earlier race—efforts too soon, too sadly, too cruelly, to be consummated.

The softer light of early morning died away, and then succeeded a warmer period when the heat became very oppressive; for in the midst of those deep forests, with no wind stirring, the change from summer to winter is not felt so rapidly as in more open lands.

About an hour after noon, Mr. Prevost proposed to stop, rest the horses, and take some refreshment; and a spot was selected where some fine oaks spread their large limbs over a beautifully clear little lake or pond, the view across which presented peeps of a distant country, some blue hills, at no very great elevation, appearing above the tops of the trees. It was a calm and quiet spot; and, while resting there for an hour, the conversation, as is generally the case, was tinged by the influence of the scene.

Mr. Prevost himself, though passed the age

when impressions of any kind are most readily received, had preserved much of the fresh and plastic character of youth, and gave himself up to any train of thought that might be suggested by circumstances. A casual word led his mind away from those drier topics on which he was often pleased to dwell, to friendship and to love ; and he and Lord H—— discussed for some time a number of subjects which rarely arise between an elderly man and one in early middle age. Of the two, strange to say, Mr. Prevost, in dealing with such topics, seemed the most enthusiastic and fanciful. He would play with them, he would embellish them, he would illustrate them, as if he had been a younglover, with his imagination freshly kindled by the torch of the blind god. But in the little said by Lord H—— there was a depth, and a strength, and an earnestness, which more than made up for the lack of figurative adornment.

Edith said little—nothing, in truth, that bore

upon the subject ; but perhaps she did not think—perhaps she did not feel—the less. It must be a strange thing, to a young girl's ears, I have often thought, when first in her presence are discussed, by the cool, fearless tongues of men, those deep sympathies, those warm affections, those tender and absorbing passions—like the famous Amreeta cup, good or evil, life or death, according to the spirit in which they are received—which form for her the key-note of the whole harmonics of her nature, the foundation of life's happiness or woe, the talisman of her whole destiny. Must she not shrink and thrill, as would the idolater at seeing profane and careless hands sport with the image of his god ?

Needless, perhaps vain, were it, to try and look into that young girl's heart. Suffice it, she was silent, or very nearly so—suffice it, that she thought and felt in her silence. Was it that the portals of a new world were opened to her, full of beauty, and of interest, and that

she stood on the threshold, gazing in voiceless awe ?

At the end of an hour, the party again mounted, and pursued their way, still through forests and valleys, across streams, and by the side of lakes ; till, at length, just as the evening sun was reaching the horizon, a visible change took place in the aspect of the country : spots were seen which had been cultivated, where harvests had grown and been reaped ; and then a house gleamed here and there through the woodland, and blue wreaths of smoke might be seen rising up. Tracks of cart-wheels channelled the forest path ; a cart or waggon was drawn up near the road-side ; high piles of fire-wood showed preparation against the bitter winter ; and every thing indicated, that the travellers were approaching some new, but prosperous, settlement.

Soon all traces of the primeval woods, except those which the little party left behind them,

disappeared; and a broad tract of well-cultivated country spread out before them, with a fine river bounding it at the distance of more than a mile. The road, too, was comparatively good and broad; and, half way between the forest and the river, that road divided into two, one branch going straight on, and another leading up the course of the stream.

“Is Sir William at the Hall, or at his castle?” asked Mr. Prevost, raising his voice to reach the ears of his guide, who kept a little in front.

“He told me, sir, to take you to the Hall if you should come on, sir,” replied the messenger. “There is a great number of Indians up at the Castle already, and he thought you might, perhaps, not like to be with them altogether.”

“Probably not,” returned Mr. Prevost, drily; and they rode on upon the direct road, till, passing two or three smaller houses, they came in sight of a very large and handsome edifice,

built of wood, indeed, but somewhat in the style of a European house of the eighteenth century.

As they approached the gates, Sir William Johnson himself, now in full costume of an officer of the British army, came down the steps to meet and welcome them; and little less ceremonious politeness did he display, in the midst of the wild woods of America, than if he had been, at the moment, in the halls of St. James's. With stately grace, he lifted Edith from her horse, greeted Lord H—— with a deferential bow, shook Mr. Prevost by the hand, and then led them himself to rooms which seemed to have been prepared for them.

“Where is my friend Walter?” he asked, as he was about to leave Mr. Prevost to some short repose; “what has induced him to deny his old acquaintance the pleasure of his society? Ha, Mr. Prevost, does he think to find metal more attractive at your lonely dwelling?”

Perhaps he may be mistaken ; for, let me tell you, the beautiful Otaitsa is here—here, in this very house ; for our good friend Gore has so completely Anglified her, that, what between her Christianity, her beauty, and her delicacy, I believe she is afraid to trust herself with four or five hundred red warriors at the Castle.”

He spoke in a gay and jesting tone ; and every one knows the blessed facility which parents have of shutting their eyes to the love-affairs of their children. Mr. Prevost did not, in the least, perceive anything in the worthy General's speech, but a good-humored joke at the boyish fondness of his son for a pretty Indian girl ; and he hastened to excuse Walter's absence by telling Sir William that he had been sent to Albany on business by Lord H——. He then enquired, somewhat anxiously—

“ Is our friend the Black Eagle here, with his daughter ? ”

“ He is here on the ground,” replied Sir

William, "but not in the house. His Indian habits are of too old standing to be rooted out like Otaitsa's, and he prefers a bear-skin and his own blue blanket to the best bed and quilt in the house. I offered him such accommodation as it afforded; but he declined with the dignity of a prince refusing the hospitality of a cottage."

"Does he seem in a good-humor to-day?" asked Mr. Prevost, hesitating whether he should tell Sir William, at a moment when they were likely to be soon interrupted, the event which had caused so much apprehension in his own mind; "you know he is somewhat variable in his mood."

"I never remarked it," replied the other "I think he is the most civilized savage I ever saw; far more than King Hendrick, though the one, since his father's death, wears a blue coat, and the other does not. He did seem a little grave, indeed; but the shadows of In-

dian mirth and gravity are so faint, it is difficult to distinguish them."

While these few words were passing Mr. Prevost had decided upon his course, and he merely replied,

"Well, Sir William, pray let Otaitsa know that Edith is here. They will soon be in each others' arms; for the two girls love like sisters."

A few words sprang to Sir William Johnson's lips, which, had they been uttered, might, perhaps, have opened Mr. Prevost's eyes, at least, to the suspicions of his friend. He was on the eve of answering, "And, some day, they may *be* sisters." But he checked himself, and nothing but the smile which should have accompanied the words made any reply.

When left alone, the thoughts of Mr. Prevost reverted at once to more pressing considerations.

"The old chief knows this event," he

said to himself: "he has heard of it—heard the whole, probably. It is wonderful how rapidly intelligence is circulated amongst this people from mouth to mouth!"

He was well nigh led into speculations regarding the strange celerity with which news can be carried orally, and was beginning to calculate how much distance would be saved in a given space, by one man shouting out the tidings to another afar off, when he forced back his mind into the track it had left, and came to the conclusion, from a knowledge of the character of the parties, and from all he had heard, that certainly the Black Eagle was cognizant of the death of one of his tribe by the hand of Captain Brooks, and that, probably—though not certainly—he might have communicated the facts, though not his views and purposes, to his daughter, whose keen eyes were likely to discover much of that which he intended to conceal.

CHAPTER XIII.

A CURIOUS and motley assembly was present that night in the halls of Sir William Johnson. There were several ladies and gentlemen from Albany: several young military men, and two or three persons of a class now extinct, but who then drove a very thriving commerce, and whose peculiar business it was to trade with the Indians. Some of the latter were exceedingly well educated men; and one or two of them were persons, not only of enlightened minds, but of enlarged views and heart. The others were mere brutal speculators, whose whole end and object in life was

to wring as much from the savage, and give as little in return, as possible.

Besides these, an Indian chief would, from time to time, appear in the rooms, often marching through in perfect silence, observing all that was going on with dignified gravity, and then going back to his companions at the castle. Amongst the rest was Otaitsa, still in her Indian costume, but evidently in gala dress, of the finest cloth and the most elaborate embroidery. Not only was she perfectly at her ease, talking to every one, laughing with many; but the sort of shrinking, timid tenderness which gave her so great a charm in the society of the few whom she loved, had given place to a wild spirit of gaiety, little in accordance with the character of her nation.

She glided hither and thither through the room: she rested in one place hardly for a moment: her jests were as light, and sometimes as sharp, as those of almost any Parisian

dame ; and, when one of the young officers ventured to speak to her somewhat lightly as the mere Indian girl, she piled upon him a mass of ridicule that wrung tears of laughter from the eyes of one or two elder men standing near.

“ I know not what has come to the child to-night,” said Mr. Gore, who was seated near Edith in one of the rooms ; “ a wild spirit seems to have seized upon her, which is quite unlike her whole character and nature—unlike the character of her people, too, or I might think that the savage had returned, notwithstanding all my care.”

“ Perhaps it is the novelty and excitement of the scene,” observed Edith.

“ Oh no,” answered the missionary ; “ there is nothing new in this scene to her ; she has been at these meetings several times during the last two or three years, but never seemed to yield to their influence as she has done to-night.”

"She has hardly spoken a word to me," said Edith; "I hope she will not forget the friends who love her."

"No fear of that, my dear," replied Mr. Gore. "Otaitsa is all heart; and that heart is a gentle one. Under its influence is she acting now; it throbs with something that we do not know; and those light words that make us smile to hear, have sources deep within her—perhaps of bitterness."

"I think I have heard her say," remarked Edith, "that you educated her from her childhood."

"When first I joined the People of the Stone," replied the missionary, "I found her there, a young child of three years old. Her mother was just dead; and, although her father bore his grief with the stern, gloomy stoicism of his nation, and neither suffered tear to fall, nor sigh to escape his lips, I could see, plainly enough, that he was struck with grief such as the Indian seldom feels, and never

shows. He received me most kindly ; made my efforts with his people easy ; and though I know not to this hour whether with himself I have been successful in communicating blessed light, he gave his daughter altogether up to my charge, and with her I have *not* failed. I fear in him the savage is too deeply rooted ever to be wrung forth, but I have made *her* one of Christ's flock, indeed."

It seemed , as if by a sort of instinct, that Otaitsa discovered she was the subject of conversation between her two friends. Twice she looked round at them from the other side of the room, and at length glided across, and seated herself beside Edith. For a moment, she sat in silence there ; and then, leaning her head gracefully on her beautiful companion's shoulder, she said, in a low whisper, " Do not close thine eyes this night, my sister, till thou seest me."

Having thus spoken, she started up, and mingled with the little crowd again.

It was still early in the night when Edith retired to the chamber assigned for her; for, even in the most fashionable society of those times, people had not learned to drive the day into the night, and make morning and evening meet. Her room was a large and handsome one; and, though plainly, it was sufficiently, furnished. No forest, as at her own dwelling, intercepted the beams of the rising moon; so she sat and contemplated the ascent of the queen of night, as she soared grandly over the distant trees.

The conduct of Otaita during that evening had puzzled Edith, and the few whispered words had excited her curiosity; for it must not be forgotten that Edith was altogether unacquainted with the fact of one of the Oneidas having been slain by the hands of Captain Brooks, within little more than two miles of her own abode. She proceeded to make her toilet for the night, however, and was almost undressed when she heard the door of her

room open quietly, and Otaita stole in, and cast her arms around her.

“Ah, my sister,” she exclaimed, “I have longed to talk with you.” Seating herself by her side, she leaned her head again upon Edith’s shoulder, but remained silent for several minutes.

The fair English girl knew that it was better to let her take her own time, and her own manner, to speak whatever she had to say ; but Otaita remained so long without uttering a word, that an indefinable feeling of alarm spread over her young companion. She felt her bosom heave, as if with struggling sighs ; she even felt some warm drops, like tears, fall upon her shoulder ; and yet Otaita remained without speaking ; till, at length, Edith said, in a gentle and encouraging tone,

“What is it, my sister ? There can surely be nothing you should be afraid to utter to my ear.”

“Not afraid,” answered Otaitsa; and then she relapsed into silence.

“But why do you weep, my sweet Blossom?” said Edith, after pausing for a moment or two, to give her time to recover her composure.

“Because one of your people has killed one of my people,” answered the Indian girl sorrowfully. “Is not that enough to make me weep?”

“Indeed!” exclaimed Edith. “I am much grieved to hear it, Blossom; but when did this happen, and how?”

“It happened only yesterday,” replied the girl; “and but a little towards the morning from your own house, my sister. It was a sad day! It was a sad day!”

“But I trust it was none near and dear to thee, Blossom, or to the Black Eagle,” said Edith, putting her arms around her, and trying to soothe her.

“No, no,” answered Otaitsa; “he was a bad man, a treacherous man, one whom my father

loved not. But that matters little. They will have blood for *his* blood."

The truth flashed upon Edith's mind at once ; for, although less acquainted with the Indian habits than her brother or her father, she knew enough of their revengeful spirit to feel sure that they would seek the death of the murderer with untiring eagerness, and she questioned her sweet companion earnestly as to all the particulars of the sad tale. Otaita told her all she knew, which was, indeed, nearly all that could be told. The man called the Snake, she said, had been shot by the white man, Woodchuck, in the wood to the north-east of Mr. Prevost's house. Intimation of the fact had spread like fire in dry grass through the whole of the Oneidas, who were flocking to the meeting at Sir William Johnson's Castle, and from them would run through the whole tribe.

" Woodchuck has escaped," Otaita said, " or would have been slain ere now ; but they will

have his life yet, my sister—" and then she added, slowly and sorrowfully, "or the life of some other white man, if they cannot catch the one."

Her words presented to Edith's mind a sad and terrible idea—one more fearful in its vagueness and uncertainty of outline, than in the darkness of particular points. That out of a narrow and limited population, some one was foredoomed to be slain—that out of a small body of men, all feeling almost as brethren, one was to be marked out for slaughter—that one family was to lose husband or father or brother, and no one could tell which—made her feel like one of a herd of wild animals, cooped up within the toils of the hunters.

Edith's first object was to learn more from her young companion; but Otaitsa had told almost all she knew.

"What they will do I know not," she said; "they do not tell us women. But I fear, Edith, I fear very much; for they say our

brother Walter was with the Woodchuck when the deed was done."

"Not so, not so," cried Edith ; "had he been so, I should have heard of it. He has gone to Albany, and had he been present I am sure he would have stopped it if he could. If your people tell truth, they will acknowledge that he was not there."

Otaitsa raised her head suddenly, with a look of joy, exclaiming—

"I will make her tell the truth, were she as cunning a snake as he was ; but yet, my sister Edith, some one else will have to die if they find not the man they seek."

The last words were spoken in a melancholy tone again ; but then she started up, repeating—

"I will make her tell the truth."

"Can you do so?" asked Edith ; "snakes are always very crafty."

"I will try at least," answered the girl ; "but oh, my sister, it were better for you, and

Walter, and your father too, to be away. When a storm is coming, we try to save what is most precious. There is yet ample time to go ; for the red people are not rash, and do not act hastily as you white people do."

"But is there no means," asked Edith, "of learning what the intention of the tribe really is?"

"I know of none," replied the girl, "that can be depended upon with certainty. The people of the Stone change no more than the stone from which they sprang. The storm beats upon them, the sun shines upon them, and there is little difference on the face of the rock. Yet let your father watch well when he is at the great talk, to-morrow. Then, if the priest is very smooth and soft-spoken, and if the Black Eagle is stern and silent, and wraps his blanket over his left breast, be sure that something sad is meditated. That is all that I can tell you—but I will make this woman speak the truth if there be truth in her, and

that too before the chiefs of the nation. Now, sister, lie down to rest. Otaitsa is going at once to her people."

"But are you not afraid?" asked Edith. "It is a dark night, dear Blossom. Lie down with me, and wait till the morning sunshine."

"I have no fear," answered the Indian girl; "nothing will hurt me. There are times, sister, when a spirit possesses us, that defies all and fears nothing. So has it been with me this night. The only thing I dreaded to face was my own thought, and I would not suffer it to rest upon anything till I had spoken with you. Now, however, I have better hopes. I will go forth, and I will make her tell the truth."

Thus saying, she left Edith's chamber, and, in about an hour and a half, she stood beside her father, who was seated near a fire kindled in one corner of the court attached to a large house, or rather fort, built by Sir William

Johnson on the banks of the Mohawk, and called by him his Castle. Round the Sachem, forming a complete circle, sat a number of the head men of the Oneidas, each in that peculiar crouching position which has been rendered familiar to our eyes by numerous paintings. The court and the Castle itself were well nigh filled with Indians of other tribes of the Five Nations; but none took any part in the proceedings of the Oneidas but themselves.

The only stranger who was present in the circle was Sir William Johnson. He was still fully dressed in his British uniform, and seated on a chair in an attitude of much dignity, with his left hand resting on the hilt of his sword. With the exception of that weapon, he had no arms whatever, and indeed it was his custom to sleep frequently in the midst of his red friends utterly unarmed and defenceless. The occasion seemed a solemn one; for all faces were very grave, and a complete silence prevailed for several minutes.

“Bring in the woman,” said Black Eagle, at length; “bring her in, and let her speak the truth.”

“Of what do you accuse her, Otaitsa?” asked Sir Willian Johnson, fixing his eyes upon his beautiful guest.

“Of uttering lies to the Sachem and to her brethren,” answered Otaitsa. “Her breath has been full of the poison of the snake.”

“Thou hearest,” said Black Eagle, turning to a woman of some one or two-and-twenty years of age. “What sayest thou?”

“I lie not,” answered the woman, in the Indian tongue. “I saw him lift the rifle, and shoot my brother dead.”

“Who did it?” asked Black Eagle, gravely and calmly.

“The Woodchuck,” answered the woman; “he did it. I know his face too well.”

“Believe her not,” rejoined Otaitsa. “The Woodchuck was ever a friend of our nation.

He is our brother. He would not slay an Oneida."

"But he was my brother's enemy," answered the woman; "there was vengeance between them."

"Vengeance on thy brother's part," retorted the old chief; "more likely he to slay the Woodchuck, than the Woodchuck to slay him."

"If she have a witness, let her bring him forward," said Otaita. "We will believe her by the tongue of another."

"I have none," cried the woman, vehemently. "I have none; but I saw him kill my brother with my own eyes, and I cry for his blood."

"Didst thou not say that there were two white men with him?" asked Otaita, raising up her right hand. "Then in this thou hast lied to the Sachem and thy brethren; and who shall say whether thou speakest the truth now?"

A curious sort of drowsy hum ran round the

circle of the Indians ; and one old man said—
“ She has spoken well.”

The woman in the meanwhile stood silent and abashed, with her eyes fixed upon the ground ; and the Black Eagle said, in a grave tone,

“ There was none.”

“ No,” said the woman, lifting her look firmly, “ there was none ; but I saw two others in the wood hard by, and I was sure they were his companions.”

“ That is guile,” said Black Eagle, sternly. “ Thou didst say that there were two men with him, one the young, pale-face Walter, and the other a tall stranger ; and thou broughtest a cloud over our eyes, and madest us think that they were present at the death.”

“ Then methinks, Black Eagle,” said Sir William Johnson, using their language nearly as fluently as his own, “ there is no faith to be put in the woman’s story, and we cannot tell what has happened.”

“Not so, my brother,” answered Black Eagle. “We know that the Snake was slain yesterday, before the sun had reached the pine tops. We believe, too, that the Woodchuck slew him; for there was enmity between them, and the ball which killed him was a large ball, such as we have never seen but in that man’s pouch.”

“That is doubtful evidence,” said Sir William, “and I trust my brother will let vengeance cease till he have better witnesses.”

The Indians remained profoundly silent for more than a minute; and then the old man who had spoken once before, replied—

“If our brother will give us up Woodchuck, vengeance shall cease.”

“That I cannot do,” answered Sir William Johnson. “First, I have no power; secondly, he may be tried by our laws; but I will not lie to you. If he can show he did it in self-defence, he will be set free.”

Again there was a long silence ; and then Black Eagle rose, saying—

“ We must take counsel.”

His face was very grave ; and, as he spoke, he drew the large blue blanket which covered his shoulders over his left breast with the gesture which Otaita had described to Edith as indicating some dark determination. Sir William Johnson marked the signs he saw, and was too well acquainted with the Indian character to believe that their thirst for blood was at all allayed ; but neither by expression of countenance nor by words did he show any doubt of his red friends, and he slept amongst them calmly that night, without a fear of the result.

At an early hour on the following morning, all the arrangements were made for the great Council or “ Talk ” that was about to be held. Some large arm-chairs were brought forth into the court. A few soldiers were seen moving about, and some negro servants. A num-

ber of the guests from the Hall came up about nine o'clock, most of them on horseback ; but when all were assembled, the body of white men present were few and insignificant compared with the multitude of Indians who surrounded them. No one showed or entertained any fear, however ; and the conference commenced and passed off with perfect peace and harmony.

It is true that several of the Indian chiefs, and more especially King Hendrick as he was called, the son of the chief who had been killed near Fort George a year or two before, made some complaints against the English government for neglect of the just claims of their red allies. All angry feeling, however, was removed by a somewhat large distribution of presents ; and, after hearing everything which the Indians had to say, Sir William Johnson rose from the chair in which he had been seated, with Lord H—— and Mr. Prevost on either

side, and addressed the assembly in English, his speech being translated sentence after sentence, by an interpreter, according to his invariable custom, when called upon to deal publicly with the heads of the Five Nations.

The whole of his address cannot be given here ; but it was skilfully turned to suit the prejudices and conciliate the friendship of the people to whom he spoke. He said that their English Father, King George, loved his red children with peculiar affection ; but that, as his lodge was a long way off, he could not always know their wants and wishes. He had very lately, however, shewn his great tenderness and consideration for the Five Nations, by appointing him, Sir William Johnson, as Indian agent, to make known, as speedily as possible, all that his red children desired. He then drew a glowing picture of the greatness and majesty of the English monarch, as the Attotarho or chief leader of a thousand different nations,

sitting under a pine-tree that reached to the sky, and receiving, every minute, messages from his children in every part of the earth.

A hum of satisfaction from the Indians followed this flight of fancy; and then the speaker went on to say that this great chief, their father, had long ago intended to do much for them, and still intended to do so; but that the execution of his benevolent purposes had been delayed and impeded by the machinations of the French, *their* enemies and *his*, whom he represented as stealthily lying in wait for all the ships and convoys of goods and presents which were destined for his Indian children, and possessing themselves of them by force or fraud. Rich as he might be, he asked how was it possible that their white father could supply all their wants, when he had so many to provide for, and when so many of his enemies had dug up the tomahawk at once. If the chiefs of the Five Nations, however, he said, would vigorously aid him in his endeavors,

King George would speedily drive the French from America ; and, to show his intention of so doing, he had sent over the great chief on his right hand, Lord H——, and many other mighty warriors, to fight side by side with their red brethren. More, he said, would come over in the ensuing spring ; and with the first flower that blossoms under the hemlock-trees, the English warriors would be ready for the battle, if the Indian chiefs there present would promise them cordial support and co-operation.

It must not be supposed that, in employing very exaggerated language, Sir William had any intention of deceiving. He merely used figures suited to the comprehension of his auditors ; and his speech gave the very highest satisfaction. The unusually large presents which had been distributed—the presence and bearing of the young nobleman who accompanied him, and a natural weariness of the state of semi-neutrality between the French and

English, which they had maintained for some time, disposed the chiefs to grant the utmost he could desire ; and the conference broke up with the fullest assurance of support from the heads of the Iroquois tribes—assurances which were faithfully made good in the campaigns which succeeded.

CHAPTER XIV.

ALL was pleasant ease at the house of Sir William Johnson, from which the stateliness of his manner did not at all detract ; for, when blended with perfect courtesy, as an Irishman, perhaps better than any man, can blend it, stateliness does not imply restraint.

The conference with the Indians had not ended until too late an hour for Mr. Prevost and his companions to return to his dwelling on the day when it took place ; and, as Walter was not expected with the answers to Lord H——'s dispatches for at least two days more, the party were not unwilling to prolong their stay till the following morning. Several of

the guests, indeed, who were proceeding to Albany direct, set out at once for their destination, certain of reaching the well-inhabited parts of the country before nightfall; and it was at one time proposed to send a letter by them to young Walter Prevost, directing him to join his father at the Hall.

The inconveniences which so frequently ensue upon deranging plans already fixed, caused this scheme to be rejected; and while her father, Lord H——, and their host, wandered forth for an hour or two along the banks of the beautiful Mohawk, Edith remained at the Hall, not without hope of seeing Otaitsa present herself with some intelligence.

The Indian girl, however, did not appear; and gloomy thoughts thronged fast upon poor Edith. She strove to banish them: she schooled herself in regard to the folly of anticipating evils only possible; but who ever mastered completely those internal warnings of coming peril or woe which as often come to cloud our

brightest days, as to darken the gloom of an already tempestuous sky. Edith's chief companion was an old lady, nearly related to Sir William, but very deaf and very silent ; and she had but small relief in conversation.

In the meantime, the three gentlemen and a young *aid-de-camp* pursued their way amongst the neat farm-houses and mechanics' shops which had gathered round the Hall. Mr. Prevost gave way to thoughts apparently as gloomy as those which haunted his daughter, but in reality not so ; for his was a mind of a discursive character, which was easily led by collateral ideas far away from any course which it was at first pursuing ; and, though he had awoke that morning full of the considerations which had engaged him during the preceding day, he was now busily calculating the results of the meeting which had just been held, and arriving at conclusions more just than were reached by many of the great statesmen and politicians of the time.

Lord H——, on his part, paid no little attention to the demeanor and all the proceedings of their host. The character of his mind was the exact reverse of that of Mr. Prevost, attaching itself keenly to one object, and being turned from its contemplation with difficulty. His thoughts still dwelt upon the consequences which were likely to ensue from the death of the Oneida by the hands of Captain Brooks; without anything like alarm, indeed, but with careful forethought for those who, in a few short days, had won for themselves a greater share of the warm affections which lay hidden in his heart, than he often bestowed upon any one.

As they quitted the door of the house, a mere trifle called his attention to something peculiar in the conduct of Sir William Johnson, and led him to believe that the mind of that officer was not altogether at ease, notwithstanding the favorable result of the meeting with the Indians.

After they had taken a step or two on their way, Sir William paused suddenly, turned back, and ordered a servant to run up to the top of the hill, and there watch till he returned.

“Mark well which paths they take,” he said, without specifying the persons of whom he spoke; “and let me hear if you see anything peculiar.”

The man seemed to understand him perfectly; and Lord H—— watched everything with the utmost attention. In the course of their ramble, not less than nine or ten persons came up at different times, and spoke a word or two to Sir William Johnson. First, a negro, then a soldier, then an Irish servant, then another white man, but with features of a strongly marked Indian character. Each seemed to give some information in a few words uttered in a low tone; and each departed as soon as he had spoken, some with a brief answer, some with none.

The evening which succeeded their walk passed somewhat differently from the preceding one. Fewer persons were present; the conversation was more general and intimate; and Sir William Johnson, seating Edith at the old-fashioned instrument which, in those days, supplied the lack of pianofortes, asked for a song which, it seems, he had heard her sing before. She complied without any hesitation, with sufficient skill and management of her voice to show that she had been well taught, but with tones so rich, so pure, and so melodious, that every sound in the room was instantly hushed, and Lord H—— approached nearer and nearer to listen.

Music, I suppose, may be considered as the highest language—the language of the heart and spirit. Mere words can only reach or convey a very limited class of ideas, the distinct and the tangible; but music can convey the fine, the indistinct, the intangible shades of feeling and of thought which escape all other

means of expression. It is only, however, to those who understand the language ; but Lord H—— was full not only of the love but of the science of music ; and he drew closer and closer to Edith, as she sang, and, at length, hung over her, with his face turned away from the other guests in the room, and bearing, written on it, feelings which he hardly yet knew were in his heart.

Sir William Johnson was standing on the other side of the beautiful girl's chair ; and, as she concluded one of the stanzas, he raised his eyes suddenly to the face of Lord H—— with a look of great satisfaction. What he saw there made him start, and then smile ; for the characters written on the nobleman's countenance were too plain to be mistaken ; and Sir William, who was not without his share of worldly wisdom, at once divined that Edith Prevost was likely to be a peeress of England.

“ What a fine musician she is ! ” exclaimed the older general to Lord H——, after he had

conducted Edith to her former seat, but before the enthusiasm had subsided ; “one would hardly expect to find such music in these wild woods of America.”

“She is all music,” said Lord H——, in an absent tone ; and then added, rousing himself ; “but you must not attribute such powers and such perfections, altogether, to America, Sir William ; for I find that Miss Prevost was educated in Europe.”

“Only till she was fourteen,” replied the other ; “but they are altogether a most remarkable family. If ever girl was perfect, it is herself. Her father, though somewhat too much given to dream, is a man of singular powers of mind ; and her brother Walter, whom I look upon almost as a son, is full of high and noble qualities and energies, which, if he lives, will certainly lead him on to greatness.”

“I think so,” returned Lord H——. And there the conversation dropped for the time.

The rest of the evening passed without any incident of notice ; and by daybreak on the following morning, the whole household were on foot. An early breakfast was ready for the travellers ; and nothing betrayed much anxiety on the part of their host, till the very moment of their departure. As they were about to set forth, however, and just when Edith appeared in her riding-habit, or Amazon, as it was then called, and the hat, with large floating ostrich plumes, usually worn at that time by ladies when on horseback, looking lovely enough, it is true, to justify any compliment, Sir William took her by the hand, saying, with a gay and courteous air,

“I am going to give you a commission, my fair Hippolyta, which is neither more nor less than the command of half-a-dozen dragoons, whom I wish to go with you for a portion of the way, partly to exercise their horses on a road, which is marvellously cleared of stumps and stones, for this part of the country, partly to examine what is going

on a little to the north-east, and partly, to bring me the pleasant intelligence that you have gone, at least, half way to your home in safety."

Lord H—— looked in his face in silence; and Edith turned a little pale, but said nothing. Mr. Prevost, however, went directly to the point, saying, "You know of some danger, my good friend; you had better inform us of all the particulars, in order that we may be upon our guard."

"None whatever, Prevost," answered Sir William, "except the general perils of inhabiting an advanced spot on the frontiers of a savage people, especially when anything has occurred to offend them. You know what we talked about yesterday morning. The Oneidas do not easily forgive; and, in this case, they will not forgive. But I have every reason to believe that they have taken their way homeward for the present. My people traced them a good way to the west; and it is only from

some chance stragglers that there is any danger."

Mr. Prevost mused, without moving to the door which was opened for them to depart, and then said in a meditating kind of tone, "I do not think they will attack any large party, Sir William, even when satisfied that they cannot get hold of the man who has incensed them. These Indians are a very cunning people; and they often satisfy even their notions of honor by an artifice, especially when two duties, as they consider them, are in opposition to one another. Depend upon it, after what passed yesterday, they will commit no act of national hostility against England. They are pledged to us, and will not break their pledge. They will attack no large party, nor slay any Englishman in open strife, though they may kidnap some solitary individual, and, according to their curious notions of atonement, make him a formal sacrifice, in expiation of the blood shed by another."

“ You know the Indians well, Prevost,” said Sir William Johnson, gravely ; “ marvellously well, considering the short time you have been amongst them.”

“ I have had little else to do than to study them,” responded the other, “ and the subject is one of great interest. But do you think I am wrong in the view I take, my good friend ?”

“ Quite the contrary,” replied Sir William, “ and that is the reason I send the soldiers with you. A party of eight or ten will be perfectly secure ; and I would certainly advise that, for the next two or three months, or till this unlucky dog, Brooks, or Woodchuck, as he is called, has been captured, no one should go any distance from his home singly. Such a party as yours might be large enough. I am not sure that my Lord’s red coat, which I am happy to see he has got on to-day, might not be sufficient protection ; for they will not risk anything which they themselves deem an act of hostility against the English government.

Still, the soldiers will make the matter more secure, till you have passed the spot where there is any chance of their being found. I repeat, I know of no peril; but I would fain guard against all, where a fair lady is concerned." And he bowed gracefully to Edith.

Little more was said; and, taking leave of their host, Mr. Prevost's party mounted their horses, and set out, followed by a corporal's guard of dragoons, a small body of which corps was then stationed in the province of New York, although, from the nature of the country in which hostilities had hitherto been carried on, small opportunity had as yet been afforded them of showing their powers against an enemy. Nor would there have been any very favorable opportunity for so doing in the present instance, even had Mr. Prevost and his companions been attacked; for though the road they had to travel was broad and open, compared to an ordinary Indian trail, yet, except at one or two points, it was hemmed in with impervious

forests, where the action of cavalry would be quite impossible, and under the screen of which, a skilful marksman might bring down his man, himself unperceived.

Sir William Johnson was nevertheless sincere in saying that he believed the very sight of the English soldiers would be quite sufficient protection. The Indians, he knew right well, would avoid anything like a struggle or a contest, and would more especially take care not to come into collision of any kind with the troops of their British allies. It was likely that they would depend entirely upon cunning, to obtain a victim wherewith to appease their vengeance ; but on this probability he did not choose altogether to rely. He saw his friends depart, however, with perfect confidence, as the soldiers went with them ; and they proceeded without seeing a single human being, after they quitted his settlement, till they reached the shores of the small lake near which they had halted on their previous jour-

ney, and where they again dismounted to take refreshment.

It was a very pleasant spot, and well fitted for a resting place : nor was repose altogether needless, though the distance already travelled was not great either for man or horse. But the day was exceedingly oppressive, like one of those which come in what is called the Indian summer, when the weather, after many a frosty day, becomes suddenly sultry, as if in the middle of June, and the air is loaded with thin yellow vapor, well deserving the term of "smoky," usually given to it on the western side of the Atlantic. Yet there was no want of air : the wind blew from the south-east, but there was no freshness on the breeze. It was like the Sirrocco, taking away strength and firmness from all it breathed upon ; and the horses, after being freed from the burden they bore, stood for several minutes with bent heads and heaving sides, without attempting to crop the forest grass beneath the trees.

Thus repose was sweet, and the look of the little lake was cool and refreshing. The travellers lingered there somewhat after the hour at which they had proposed to depart, and it was the negro, who took care of the luggage, who first warned them of the waning of the day.

“Massa forget,” he said, “sun go early to bed in October. Twelve mile to go yet, and road wuss nor dis.”

“True, true,” replied Mr. Prevost, rising. “We had better go on, my Lord, for it is now past two, and we shall barely reach home by daylight. I really think, Corporal,” he continued, turning to the non-commissioned officer, who had been seated with his men hard-by, enjoying some of the good things of life, “that we need not trouble you to go farther. There is no trace of any Indians, or indeed of any human beings, in the forest, but ourselves. Had there been so, my good friend Chundo, here,

would have discovered it; for he knows their tracks as well as any of their own people."

"Dat I do, Massa," replied the negro, to whom he pointed. "No Ingin pass dis road since yesterday, I swear."

"My orders were to go to the big blazed Basswood tree, sir, four miles farther," observed the soldier, in a firm but respectful tone; "and I must obey orders."

"You are right," said Lord H——, pleased with the man's demeanor. "What is your name, Corporal?"

"Clithero, my lord," replied the man, with a military salute; "Corporal Clithero."

Lord H—— bowed his head; and the party, remounting, pursued their way. The road, however, as the negro had said, was more difficult in advance than it had been nearer to Sir William Johnson's settlement; and it took the whole party an hour to reach the great Basswood tree, which had been mentioned, and

which was marked out from the rest of the forest by three large marks upon the bark, hewn by some surveyor's axe when the road had been laid out. There the party stopped for a moment or two ; and with a few words of thanks, Mr. Prevost and his companions parted from their escort.

“How dim the air along the path is!” ejaculated Lord H——, looking on ; “and yet the sun, getting to the west, is shining right down it through the valley. One could almost imagine it was filled with smoke.”

“This is what we call a smoky day in America,” replied Mr. Prevost ; “but I never knew the Indian summer come on us with such a wind.”

No more was said on that matter at the time ; and, as the road grew narrower, Mr. Prevost and the negro, as best acquainted with the way, rode first, while Lord H—— followed by Edith's side, conversing with her in quiet and

easy tones ; but with words which sometimes caused the color to vary a little in her cheek.

These words were not exactly words of love. Write them down, and they might have very little meaning—less application ; but all things have such a harmony throughout the universe, that every thing separated from its accessories means nothing, or worse than nothing. His tones, I have said, were low and easy ; but they were tender, too. His words were not words of love, but they had a fire in them that nothing but love could give ; and the contrast between the low, easy tone, and that rich, glowing language, added all that was needful to give them the meaning of the heart, rather than the meaning of dictionaries. He spoke of her singing the night before, and of music in general ; he spoke of the beauties of the scenery, the tints of the landscape : he spoke of the old world and the new, and society and solitude. But it mattered not : whatever he

spoke of, he thought of Edith Prevost; and there was something that shewed her he did so.

Thus they went on for some four miles farther; and the evening was evidently closing round them rapidly, though no ray had yet passed from the sky. Suddenly Mr. Prevost drew in his rein, saying, in a low but distinct voice, to the negro, "What is that crossing the road?"

"No Ingin," cried the negro, whose eyes had been constantly bent forward.

"Surely there is smoke drifting across the path," said Mr. Prevost; "and I think I smell it also."

"I have thought so for some time," said Lord H——, who was now close to them with Edith. "Are fires common in these woods?"

"Not very," answered Mr. Prevost, "but the season has been unusually dry. Good Heavens! I hope my fears are not prophetic: I've been thinking all day of what would become of the Lodge, if the forest were to take fire."

“ We had better ride on as fast as possible,” said the nobleman ; “ for then, if the worst happens, we may be able to save some of your property.”

“ We must be cautious, we must be cautious,” returned the other, in a thoughtful tone. “ Fire is a capricious element, and often runs in directions the least expected. I have heard of people getting so entangled in a burning wood, as not to be able to escape.”

“ O yes,” cried the negro, “ when I were little boy, I remember quite well, Massa John Bostock, and five other men wid him, git in pine wood behind Albany, and it catch fire. He run here and dere, but it git all round him, and roast him up black as I be. I saw dem bring in what dey fancied was he, but it no better dan a great pine stump.”

“ If I remember,” observed Lord H——, “ we passed a high hill somewhere near this spot where we had a fine clear view over the whole of the woody region round. We had

better make for that at once. The fire cannot yet have reached it, if my remembrance of the distance is correct; for, though the wind sets towards us, the smoke is as yet anything but dense. It may be miles off, even beyond your house."

"Pray God it be so!" ejaculated Mr. Prevost, spurring forward; "but I fear it is nearer."

The rest followed as quickly as the stump and the fallen trees would let them; and, at the distance of half a mile, began the ascent of the hill to which Lord H—— had alluded. As far as that spot, the smoke had been growing denser and denser every moment; apparently pouring along the valley formed by that hill and another on the left, through which valley, let it be remarked, the small river in which Walter had been seen fishing by Sir William Johnson, but now a broad and very shallow stream, took its course onwards toward the Mohawk. As they began to ascend,

however, the smoke decreased ; and Edith exclaimed, joyfully—

“ I hope, dear father, the fire is farther to the north.”

“ We shall see, we shall see,” said Mr. Prevost, still pushing his horse forward. “ The sun is going down fast ; and a little haste will be better on all accounts.”

In about five minutes more, the summit of the hill was reached, at a spot where, in laying out two roads which crossed each other there, the surveyors had cleared away a considerable portion of the wood, leaving, as Lord II—— had said, a clear view over the greater part of the undulating forest country, lying in the angle formed by the upper Hudson and the Mohawk. Towns have now risen up ; villages are scattered over the face of the land ; rich fields of wheat and maize, gardens, orchards, and peaceful farm-houses, greet the eye wherever it is turned from the summit

of that hill; but it was different then. With the few exceptions of a small pond or lake, a rushing stream, or a natural savanna of a few hundred acres, it was all forest; and the only sign of man's habitation which could be descried at any time, was the roof and chimneys of Mr. Prevost's house, which, in general, could be discerned rising above the trees, upon an eminence a good deal lower than the summit which the travellers had reached. Now, however, the house could not be seen.

The sight which the country presented was a fine but a terrible one. On the one side, the sun, with his lower limb just dipped beneath the forest, was casting up floods of many-colored light, orange and purple, gold, and even green, upon the light, fantastic clouds scattered over the western sky; while above, some fleecy vapours, fleeting quickly along, were all rosy with the touch of his beams.

Onward to the east and north, filling up the

whole valley between the hill on which they stood and the eminence crowned by Mr. Prevost's house, and forming an almost semicircular line, of some three or four miles in extent, was a dense, reddish-brown cloud of smoke, marking where the fire raged, and softening off at each extreme into a bluish grey. No general flame could be perceived through this heavy cloud; but, ever and anon, a sudden flash would break across it, not bright and vivid, but dull and half obscured, when the fierce element got hold of some of the drier and more combustible materials of the forest. Once or twice, too, suddenly, at one point of the line or another, a single tree, taller, perhaps, than the rest, or more inflammable, or garmented in a thick matting of dry vine, would catch the flame, and burst forth from the root to the topmost branch like a tall column of fire; and here and there, too, from what cause I know not—perhaps, from an accumulation of dry grass and withered leaves,

seized upon by the fire and wind together—a volley of bright sparks would mingle with the cloud of smoke, and be thrown up, for a moment, to the westward.

It was a grand, but an awful, spectacle ; and, as Mr. Prevost gazed upon it, thoughts and feelings crowded into his bosom, which even Edith herself could not estimate.

CHAPTER XV.

“Look, look, Prevost!” cried Lord H——, after they had gazed during one or two minutes in silence; “the wind is drifting away the smoke; I can see the top of your house; it is safe as yet—and will be safe,” he added, “for the wind sets somewhat away from it.”

“Not enough,” said Mr. Prevost, in a dull, gloomy tone. “The slightest change, and it is gone. The house I care not for; the barns, the crops, are nothing. They can be replaced, or I could do without them; but there are things within that house, my Lord, I cannot do without.”

“Do you not think we can reach it?” asked Lord H——. “If we were to push our horses into the stream there, we might follow its course up, as it seems broad and shallow, and the trees recede from the banks. Are there any deep spots in its course?”

“None, massa,” replied the negro.

“Let us try, at all events,” exclaimed Lord H——, turning his horse’s head; “we can but come back again, if we find the heat and smoke too much for us.”

“My daughter!” ejaculated Mr. Prevost, in a tone of deep, strong feeling; “my daughter, Lord H——!”

The young nobleman was silent. The stories he had heard that day, and many that he had heard before, of persons getting entangled in burning forests, and never being able to escape—which, while, in the first enthusiasm of the moment, he thought only of himself and of Mr. Prevost, had seemed to him but visions, wild chimeras—assumed a terrible reality, as

soon as the name of Edith was mentioned ; and he would have shuddered to see the proposal adopted, which he had made only the moment before. He was silent, then ; and Mr. Prevost was the first who spoke.

“ I must go,” he said, with gloomy earnestness, after some brief consideration. “ I must go, let what will betide.”

He relapsed into silence again, and there was a terrible struggle within his bosom, which the reader cannot, even in part, comprehend, without having withdrawn for him that dark curtain which shades the inmost secrets of the heart from the cold eyes of the unobservant world. He had to choose whether he would risk the sacrifice of many things dearer to him than life itself, or go through that fiery gulf before him—whether he would take that daughter, far dearer than life, with him, exposing her to all the peril that he feared not for himself, the scorching flame, the suffocating smoke, the falling timber—or whether he should

leave her behind him, to find her way in darkness, and through a forest perhaps tenanted by enemies, to a small farm-house, seven or eight miles off, where resided some kind and friendly people, who would give her care and good attendance. Then came the question—for the former was soon decided—whom he should leave with her. Some one was needed with himself, for, in the many, many perils that environed his short path, he could hardly hope to force his way alone, unaided. Lord H—— might have been his most serviceable companion in one view ; for his courage, his boldness, his habits of prompt decision, and his clearness of observation, were already well and publicly known.

But then, to leave Edith alone in that dark night, in that wild wood, with nothing but a negro for her guide ; a man shrewd and clear-witted, keen and active enough, yet with few moral checks upon his passions, few restraints of education or honor, and still fewer of religion and

the fear of God. It was not to be thought of. In Lord H—— he felt certain he could trust. He knew, that in scenes as dangerous to the spirit as any he could go through would be to the body, he had come out unfallen, unwounded, untouched. He had the reputation and the bearing of a man of honor, and a gentleman; and Mr. Prevost felt that the man must be base, indeed, low, degraded, vile, who, with such a trust as Edith on his conscience, could waver even in thought.

Such considerations pressed upon him heavily—they could not be disposed of by rapid decision; and he remained for two or three minutes profoundly silent. Then, turning suddenly to Lord H——, he said—

“My lord, I am going to entrust to you the dearest thing I have on earth, my daughter—to place her under the safeguard of your honor—to rely for her protection and defence upon your chivalry. As an English nobleman, of high name and fame, I do trust you without a doubt,

I must make my way through that fire by some means—I must save some papers, and two pictures, which I value more than my own life. I will take my good friend Chando here with me. I must leave you to conduct Edith to a place of safety.”

“Oh, my father!” cried Edith; but he continued to speak without heeding her.

“If you follow that road,” he continued, pointing to the one which led southward, “you will come at the distance of about seven miles to a good-sized farm-house on the left of the road. Edith knows it, and can show you the way up to it. The men are most likely out, watching the progress of the fire; but you will find the women within; and good and friendly they are, though homely and uneducated. I have no time to stop for farther directions. Edith, my child, God bless you! Do not cloud our parting with a doubt of Heaven’s protection. Should anything occur—and be it as He wills—you and Walter will

find at the lawyer's at Albany all papers referring to this small farm, and to the little we still have in England. God bless you, my child, God bless you !”

Thus saying, he turned and rode fast down the hill, beckoning the negro to follow him.

“ Oh, my father, my father !” cried Edith, dropping her rein and clasping her hands together, longing to follow, yet unwilling to disobey. “ He will be lost—I fear he will be lost !”

“ I trust not,” said Lord H——, in a firm, calm tone, well fitted to inspire hope and confidence. “ He knows the country well, and can take advantage of every turning to avoid the flame. Besides, if you look along what I imagine to be the course of the stream, you will see a deep undulation as it were in that sea of smoke, and, when the wind blows strongly, it is almost clear. He said, too, that the banks continued free from trees.”

“ As far as the bridge and the rapids near

our house," replied Edith, "after that; they are thickly wooded."

"But the fire has evidently not reached that spot," observed the young nobleman; "all the ground within half a mile of the house is free at present. I saw it quite distinctly a moment ago, and the wind is setting this way."

"Then can we not follow him?" asked his fair companion, imploringly.

"To what purpose?" returned Lord H——; "and besides," he added, "let me call to your mind the answer of the good soldier, Corporal Clithero, just now. He said he must obey orders; and he was right. A soldier to his commander: a child to a parent: a Christian to his God, have, I think, but one duty—to obey. Come, Edith, let us follow the directions we have received. The sun is already beneath the forest edge; we can do no good gazing here; and although I do not think there is any danger, and believe you will be quite safe under my protection, yet, for many

reasons, I could wish to place you beneath the shelter of a roof, and in the society of other women as soon as may be."

"Thank you much," she answered, gazing up into his face, on which the lingering light in the west cast a warm glow; "you remind me of my duty, and strengthen me to follow it. I have no fear of any danger, with you to protect me, my Lord—it was for my father only I feared. But it was wrong to do so even for him. God will protect us all, I do hope and believe. We must take this way, my Lord." And with a deep sigh she turned her horse's head upon the path which her father had pointed out.

There is no situation in which good feeling shows itself more brightly than in combat with good feeling. It may seem a paradox; but it is not so. Lord H—— did not at that moment like to hear Edith Prevost call him by his formal title. He would fain have had her give him some less ceremonious name. Nay, more, he would have gladly poured into her

ear, at that moment of grief and anxiety, the tale of love which had more than once during their ride been springing to his lips, and which he fondly fancied, with man's usual misappreciation of woman's sensitiveness, might give her support and comfort—for by this time he felt sure that, if he rightly appreciated her, she was not indifferent towards him. But he remembered that she was there a young girl, left alone with him, at night, in a wild forest—a precious trust to his honor and his delicacy; and he struggled hard and manfully to govern every feeling, and regulate every word. What if a degree of growing tenderness modulated his tone?—what if the words “Miss Prevost,” were uttered as if they should have been “Edith?”—what if the familiar expression of “my dear young lady,” sounded almost as if it had been, “dear girl?” We must not look too closely, or judge too hardly. There was but enough tenderness to comfort, and not alarm—just sufficient famili-

arity to make her feel that she was with a friend, and not a stranger.

No general subject of conversation could, of course, be acceptable at that moment ; only one topic had they to discuss. And yet Lord H—— made more of that than some men would have made of a thousand. He comforted, he consoled : he raised up hope and expectation. His words were full of promise ; and from everything he wrung some illustration to support and cheer.

If he had appeared amiable in the eyes of Edith, in the quiet intercourse of calm and peaceful hours, much more so did he appear to her now, when the circumstances in which she was placed called forth all that was kind and feeling in his heart, naturally gentle, though it had been somewhat steeled by having to struggle, and to act with cold and heartless men in scenes of peril, and of strife.

A few moments after they left the summit of the hill, and began the more gentle descent

which stretched away to the south-east, the last rays of the sun were withdrawing, and night succeeded ; but it was the bright and sparkling night of the American sky. There was no moon, indeed ; but the stars burst forth in multitudes over the firmament, larger, more brilliant, than they are ever beheld even in the clearest European atmosphere ; and they gave light enough to enable the two travellers to see their path. The wind still blew strongly, and carried the smoke away ; and the road was wide enough to show the starry canopy overhanging the trees.

Lord H—— lifted his hand, and, pointing to one peculiarly large orb which glittered not far from the zenith, said in a grave but confident tone, “The God who made that great, magnificent world, and who equally created the smallest emmet that runs along our path—who willed into being innumerable planetary systems with their varied motions, and perfected the marvellous organization of the most

minute insect, must be a God of love and mercy, as well as of power ; and is still, I do believe, acting in mercy in all that befalls us here on earth."

"I believe and trust so too," answered Edith ; "yet there are times and seasons when, in our blindness, we cannot see the working of the merciful, in the mighty hand ; and the heart sinks with terror for want of its support. Surely there can be no sin in this. Our Divine Master, himself, when in our mortal nature, on the cross, exclaimed, in the darkest hour, '*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me !*' "

Obliged to go exceedingly slowly, but little progress had been made in an hour, and, by the end of that time, a strong odour of the burning wood, and a pungent feeling in the eyes, showed that some portion of the smoke was reaching them.

"I fear the wind has changed," said Edith ; "the smoke seems coming this way."

“The better for your father’s house, dear lady,” answered Lord H——. “It was a change to the westward he had to fear; the more fully east, the better.”

They fell into silence again; but in a minute or two after, looking to the left of the road, where the trees were very closely set, though there was an immense mass of brushwood underneath, Lord H—— beheld a small solitary spot of light, like a lamp burning. It was seen and hidden, seen and hidden again, by the trees as they rode on, and must have been at about three or four hundred yards distance. It seemed to change its place, too; to shift, to quiver; and then, in a long winding line, it crept slowly round and round the boll of a tree, like a fiery serpent, and, a moment after, with flash, and crackling flame, and fitful blaze, it spread flickering over the dry branches of a pitch-pine.

“The fire is coming nearer, dear Miss Prevost,” said Lord H——; “and it is necessary we

should use some forethought. How far, think you, this farm house is now?"

"Nearly four miles," answered Edith.

"Does it lie due south?" asked her companion.

"Very nearly," she replied.

"Is there any road to the westward?" demanded the young nobleman, with his eyes still fixed upon the distant flame.

"Yes," she answered; "about half a mile on, there is a tolerable path made along the side of the hill, on the west, to avoid the swamp during wet weather, but it rejoins this road a mile or so farther on."

"Let us make haste," said Lord H——, abruptly; "the road seems fair enough just here, and I fear there is no time to lose."

He put his hand upon Edith's rein as he spoke, to guide the horse on, and rode forward, perhaps, somewhat less than a quarter of a mile, watching, with an eager eye, the increasing light to the east, where it was now seen glim-

mering through the trees in every direction, looking through the fretted trellis-work of branches, trunks, and leaves, like a multitude of red lamps hung up in the forest. Suddenly, at a spot where there was an open space or streak, as it was called, running through some two or three hundred yards of the wood, covered densely with brush, but destitute of tall trees, the whole mass of the fire appeared to view; and the travellers seemed gazing into the mouth of a furnace. Just then, the wind shifted a little more, and blew down the streak: the cloud of smoke rolled forward: flash after flash burst forth along the line as the fire caught the withered leaves on the top of the bushes: then the bushes themselves were seized upon by the fire, and sent flaming far up into the air.

Onward rushed the destroying light, with a roar, and a crackle, and a hiss—caught the taller trees on either side, and poured across the road right in front.

Edith's horse, unaccustomed to such a sight, started and pulled vehemently back ; but Lord H——, catching her riding-whip from her hand, struck him sharply on the flank, and forced him forward by the rein. But again the beast resisted.

Not a moment was to be lost ; time wasted in the struggle must have been fatal ; and, casting the bridle free, he threw his right arm round her light form, lifted her from the saddle, and seated her safely before him. Then striking his spurs into the sides of his well-trained charger, he dashed, at full speed, through the burning bushes, and in two minutes had gained the ground beyond the fire.

“ You are saved, dear Edith,” he said, “ you are saved !”

He could not call her Miss Prevost then ; and, though she heard the name he gave her, at that moment of gratitude and thanksgiving it sounded only sweetly on her ear.

I have not paused to tell what were Edith's thoughts and feelings when she first saw the fire hemming them in. They were such as the feelings of any young and timid woman might be at the prospect of immediate and terrible destruction.

As always happens, when any of the stern events of Fate place before us an apparent certainty of speedy death — when the dark gates between the two valleys seem to be reached, and opened to let us pass—when the flood, or the fire, or the precipitous descent, or any other sudden casualty, seems ready to hurry us in an instant into eternity, without dimming the sight of the mind, or withering the powers of reason and of memory, as in the slow progress of sickness or decay—as always happens, I say, in such cases, Edith's mind passed rapidly, like a swallow on the wing, over every event of her past existence ; and thoughts, feelings, hopes, joys, griefs, cares, expectations, regrets, rose one after the other to the eye, presented

with the clearness and intensity which will probably appertain in a future state to all the things done in the flesh. Every memory, too, as it rose before her, seemed to say, in a sad and solemn tone, "We are gone for ever!"

It is terrible to part with life—with all its joys, ay, and even with its cares—at the bright season of hope and happiness; to have the blossom broken off the bough of life, before the fruit can form or ripen; and Edith felt it as much as any one could feel it. But it is only necessary to allude to her feelings, in order to contrast them with the joy and gratitude she felt when the moment of peril had passed away.

"Thank God, thank God!" exclaimed Edith; "and oh, my Lord, how can I ever show my gratitude to you?"

Lord H—— was silent for a moment, and then said, in a low tone—for it *would* be spoken:—

“ Dear Edith, I have no claim to gratitude ; but if you can give me love, instead, the gratitude shall be yours for life. But I am wrong, very wrong, for speaking to you thus, at this moment, and in these circumstances. Yet there are emotions which force themselves into words, whether we will or not. Forget those I have spoken, and do not tremble so, for they shall not be repeated till I find a fitter occasion—and then they shall immediately. Now, dear Edith, I will ride slowly on with you to this farm-house ; will leave you there with the good people ; and, if possible, get somebody to guide me round another way, to join your father, and assure him of your safety. That he is safe, I feel confident ; for this very change of wind must have driven the fire away from him. Would you rather walk ? for I am afraid you have an uneasy seat, and we are quite safe now ; the flames all go another way.”

From many motives, Edith preferred to go on

foot, and Lord H—— suffered her to slip gently to the ground. Then, dismounting himself, he drew her arm through his, and, leading his horse by the bridle, proceeded along the road over the shoulder of the hill, leaving the lower-road, which the flame still menaced, on their left.

Edith needed support, and their progress was slow, but Lord H—— touched no more upon any subject, that could agitate her, and at the end of about an hour and a half, they reached the farm-house, and knocked for admission.

There was no answer, however; no dogs barked; no sounds were heard; and all was dark within. Lord H—— knocked again. Still all was silent; and, putting his hand upon the latch, he opened the door.

“The house seems deserted,” he said. Then raising his voice, he called loudly to wake any slumbering inhabitant who might be within.

Still no answer was returned; and he felt puzzled, and more agitated than he would have been in the presence of any real danger. No other place of shelter was near; he could not leave Edith there, as he had proposed; yet the thought of passing a long night with her in that deserted house, produced a feeling of indecision, chequered by many emotions which were not usual to him.

"This is most unlucky!" he ejaculated. "What is to be done now?"

"I know not," replied Edith, in a low and distressed tone. "I fear, indeed, the good people are gone. If the moon would but rise, we might see what is really in the house."

"I can soon get a light," rejoined Lord H——; "there is wood enough scattered about to light a fire. Stay here in the doorway, while I fasten my horse, and gather some sticks together. I will not go out of sight."

The sticks were soon gathered, and carried into the large kitchen into which the door

opened directly. Lord H——'s pistols, which he took from the holsters, afforded the means of lighting a cheerful fire on the hearth ; and, as soon as it blazed up, a number of objects were seen in the room, which shewed that the house had been inhabited lately, and abandoned suddenly. Nothing seemed to have been carried away, indeed ; and amongst the first things that were perceived, much to Edith's comfort, were candles, and a tin lamp of Dutch manufacture, ready trimmed. These were soon lighted ; and Lord H——, taking his fair companion's hand in his, and gazing fondly, on her pale and weary face, begged her to seek some repose.

"I cannot, of course," he said, "leave you here, and join your father, as I proposed just now ; but, if you will go up stairs, and seek some room, where you can lock yourself in, in case of danger, I will keep guard here below. Most likely, all the people of the house have gone forth to watch the progress of the fire, and may return speedily."

Edith mused, and shook her head, saying—

“I think something else must have frightened them away.”

“Would you have courage to fire a pistol in case of need?” asked Lord H——, in a low tone.

Edith gently inclined her head, and he then added—

“Stay, I will charge this for you again.”

He then reloaded the pistol, the charge of which he had drawn to light the fire, and was placing it in Edith’s hand, when a tall, dark figure glided into the room with a step perfectly noiseless. Lord H—— drew her suddenly back, and placed himself before her; but a second glance showed him the dignified form and fine features of Otaitsa’s father.

“Peace!” exclaimed the old chief. “Peace to you, my brother!”

And he held out his hand to Lord H——, who took it frankly. Black Eagle then un-

fastened the blue blanket from his shoulders, and threw it round Edith, saying—

“Thou art my daughter, and art safe. I have heard the voice of the Cataract, and its sound was sweet. It is a great water, and a good. The counsel is wise, my daughter. Go thou up, and rest in peace. The Black Eagle will watch by the Cataract till the eyes of morning open in the east. The Black Eagle will watch for thee, as for his own young ; and thou art safe.”

“I know I am when thou art near, my father,” said Edith, taking his brown hand in hers ; “but is it so with all mine ?”

“If I can make it so,” answered Black Eagle. “Go, daughter, and be at peace. This one, at least, is safe, also ; for he is a great chief of our white fathers ; and we have a treaty with him. The man of the Five Nations who would lift his hand against him is accursed.”

Edith knew that she could extract nothing more from him, and, with her mind somewhat lightened, but not wholly relieved, she ascended to the upper story. Lord H—— seated himself on the step at the foot of the stairs; and the Indian chief crouched down beside him. But both kept a profound silence; and, in a few minutes after, the moon, slowly rising over the piece of cleared ground in front, poured in upon their two figures as they sat there, side-by-side, in strange contrast.

CHAPTER XVI.

THERE was the fate of another connected with the events of that night, of whom some notice must be taken, from the influence which his destiny exercised over the destinies of all. With greater promptness and celerity than had been expected from him, even by those who knew him best, Walter Prevost had executed the business entrusted to him, and was ready to set out from Albany, a full day, at least, before his return had been expected by his family. Fortune had favored him, it is true. He had found the Commander-in-Chief in the city, and at leisure. A man of a prompt and active mind had readily appreciated the promptitude and

activity of the lad ; and his business had been dispatched as readily as circumstances permitted.

A boat sailing up the Hudson with some stores and goods for traffic, was found to convey him a considerable way on his journey ; and he was landing at a point on the western bank of the river, some seventeen miles from his father's house, at the very moment that Mr. Prevost, Lord H——, and Edith, were mounting by the side of the little lake to pursue their journey.

The way before him was rough and uneven, and the path somewhat intricate ; but he thought he knew it sufficiently to make his way by it, before sunset, to a better known part of the country, and he hurried on with youthful confidence and vigor. His rifle in his hand, his knapsack on his shoulder, and a good large hunting-knife in his belt, with great agility of limbs and no small portion of bodily vigor, he would have proved no contemptible opponent

in the presence of any single enemy. But he never thought of enemies ; and all in his bosom was courage and joy and expectation.

Whatever great cities and camps and courts might have offered, Albany, at least, a small provincial capital filled with a staid and somewhat rigid people, and only enlivened by the presence of a regiment or two of soldiers, had no attraction for him ; and he was heartily glad to escape from it again, to the free life around his paternal dwelling, and to the society of his father and Edith—and Otaitsa.

Steadily he went along, climbed the hills, strode along the plain, and forded the river. The traces of cultivation soon became fewer, and then ceased ; and, following resolutely the path before him, two hours passed before he halted, even to look around. Then, however, he paused for a minute or two to consider his onward course.

Two or three Indian trails crossed at the spot where he stood, one of them so deeply

indented in the ground as to show that its frequent use existed from a very ancient date. Its course seemed to lie in the direction in which he wanted to go ; and he thought he remembered having followed it some months before. Across it ran the settlers' way, broader and better marked out, but not very direct to his father's house ; and he was hesitating which he should take, when the sound of creaking wheels, and the common cry used by ploughmen and teamsters to their cattle, showed him that some one was coming, who was likely to give him better information. That information seemed the more necessary as the day was already far on the decline ; and he had not yet reached a spot of which he could be certain.

A moment or two after, coming up the lane in the wood, as we should call it in England, appeared a heavy ox-waggon, drawn by four stout steers, and loaded with three women and a number of boxes, while, by the side of the rude vehicle, appeared three men on foot, and

one on horseback, each very well armed, together with no less than five dogs of different descriptions.

Walter instantly recognised, in the horseman, the farmer who lived some ten miles to the south-west of his father's house. The farmer was a good-humored, kindly-hearted man, honest enough, but somewhat selfish in his way; always wishing to have the best of a bargain, if it could be obtained without absolute *roguery*, yet willing enough to share the fruits of his labor or his cunning with any one who might be in need.

On the present occasion, however, he was either sullen or stupid; and it was indeed clear that both he and his male companions had been drinking quite enough to dull the edge of intellect in some degree. Those on foot went on, without even stopping the oxen to speak with their young neighbour; and the farmer himself only paused, for a moment or two, to answer Walter's questions.

“Why, Mr. Whitter,” said the young gentleman, “you seem to be moving with all your family.”

“Ay, ay,” answered the farmer, a look of dull cunning rising to his face. “I don’t like the look of things. I’ve had a hint. I guess there are other places better than the forest just now—though not so warm, mayhap.”

“Why, what is the matter?” asked Walter, “has anything happened?”

“Oh no,” answered the farmer, looking uncomfortable, and giving his bridle a little sort of jerk, as if he wished to pass on. “The forest’s too full of Ingians for my notion; but as you and your father are so fond of them and they of you, there’s no harm will come to you, I guess.”

His manner was almost uncivil; and Walter moved out of his way without even asking the question he had intended. The man passed on; but suddenly he seemed to think better of the matter, and, turning round in the saddle,

called out, in a voice much louder than necessary, considering the distance between them—

“I say, Master Walter, if you’re going home, you’d better take that deep trail to the right, I guess. It’s shorter and safer; and them red devils, or some other vermin, have set fire to the wood on there. It’s not much of a thing just yet; but there’s no knowing how it will spread. However, if you keep to the west, you’ll get on. I’m going to more civilized parts for a month or two, seeing I have got all my crops in safe.”

As soon as these words were uttered, he turned, and rode after his waggon; and Walter at once took the Indian trail which the other had mentioned. About half-a-mile farther on, for the first time, he perceived the smell of smoke; and, as soon as he reached the summit of another hill beyond, the whole scene of the conflagration was before his eyes. Between the spot where he stood and his father’s house, stretched a broad belt of fire and

smoke, extending a full mile to the north further than he had expected from the vague account of the farmer; and the cloud of brownish vapor had rolled so far up the opposite slope, that the lad could neither see the dwelling itself, nor distinguish what spot the fire had actually reached.

Ignorant of the absence of his father and sister, and well aware how rapidly the flame extended when once kindled in a wood, after a long season of dry weather, Walter's heart sank as he gazed. But he lost no time in useless hesitation. The sun was already setting; the distance was still considerable; and he resolved to break through that fiery circle, if it were possible, and reach his home at once.

Onward he plunged, then, down the side of the hill; and, the moment he descended, the whole scene was shut out from his sight so completely that, but for the strong and increasing smell of burning pine-wood, and a feeling of unnatural warmth, he would have

had no intimation that a fire was raging close at hand. As he came nearer and nearer, however, a certain rushing sound met his ear, something like that of a heavy gale of wind sweeping the forest, and the smoke became suffocating; while through the branches and stems of the trees a red light shone, especially towards the south and west, showing where the fire raged with the greatest fierceness.

Breathing thick and fast, he hurried on, lighted by the flames alone; for the sun had sunk by this time, and the dense cloud of smoke which hung over this part of the wood shut out every star, till, at length, he reached the very verge of the conflagration. Some hundreds of acres lay before him, with trees, some fallen one over the other, some still standing, but deprived of foliage, and with masses of brushwood and long trailing parasites, all in fiery confusion and glowing with intense heat.

To proceed in that direction, he felt was death. He could hardly breathe; his face

seemed scorched and burning ; and yet the drops of perspiration rolled heavily from his forehead. Retreating a little to escape the heat, he turned his steps northward ; but, by this time, he had lost the trail, and was forcing his way through the brush-wood, encumbered by his rifle and knapsack, when, suddenly, by the light of the fire shining through the trees, he saw a dark figure, some twenty or thirty yards before him, waving to him eagerly and apparently calling to him also. The roar and crackling of the burning wood was too loud for any other sounds to be heard ; but the gestures of the figure seemed to direct him towards the south again ; and, obeying the signs, he soon found himself once more upon an Indian trail.

The next instant, the figure he had seen was upon the same path, and a little nearer. It was that of an Indian ; but, in the smoky light, Walter Prevost could not distinguish the tribe or nation. He advanced cautiously,

then, with his thumb upon the cock of the rifle ; but, as soon as he was within hearing, the man called to him, in the Oneida tongue, and in a friendly tone, telling him to follow, and warning him that death lay to the westward.

Thrown off his guard by such signs of interest, the lad advanced with a quick step, and was soon close to his guide, though the man walked fast.

“Is the house burnt, brother?” asked the youth, eagerly.

“What, the lodge of the pale-face?” returned the Indian. “No—it stands fast.”

“Thank God for that!” ejaculated Walter Prevost in English.

But the words had hardly passed his lips, when he suddenly felt his arms seized ; his rifle was wrested from his hands, and he himself cast backward on the ground. Two savage faces glared above him, and he expected to see the gleam of the deadly tomahawk the next instant.

“What now?” he exclaimed, in Oneida; “am I not your brother? Am I not the son of the Black Eagle—the friend of the children of the Stone?”

There was no answer; but in dead silence the Indians proceeded with rapid hands to bind his arms with thongs of deer-skin; and then, raising him on his feet, forced him to retread his steps along the very trail which had brought him thither.

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